

FROM FOUNDATION DEGREE TO BACHELOR DEGREE:
EXPLORING THE IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF PART-TIME
WOMEN STUDENTS WITHIN ONE VOCATIONALLY FOCUSED
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

by

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From Foundation degree to Bachelor degree: exploring the identity construction of part-time women students within one vocationally focused higher education institution.

This thesis explores the experiences of women who study on a part-time Foundation degree and transition on to part-time Bachelor level study. Using Foucault's construct of *governmentality*, it investigates how external and internal forms of power through discourse influence the development of academic and personal identities.

As a small-scale study, it centres on the experiences of women studying on Foundation degrees in Supporting Learning and Early Childhood Studies. Data collection involved a questionnaire given to all internally progressing students followed by two stages of in-depth interviews involving five women. The first interview involved the use of images to support the creation of narratives. The second interview reviewed these narratives and considered transitional experiences. Finally, two focus groups held one year apart offered collective transitional accounts.

What emerged through the application of Foucault's *governmentality* were the ways in which the women in this study responded to personal and relational forms of power through discourse whilst studying on the Foundation degree and entering on to Bachelor level study. Resilience was revealed as a personal form of resistance to power that when linked to motives for study, interdependent learning and the internal progression the women experienced on to the Bachelor degree underpinned the development of strong academic and personal identities. The

development of these identities meant the women in this study considered themselves as personally and academically transformed through their experiences of studying on the Foundation degree and their subsequent transition on to Bachelor level study.

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List of Abbreviations

BA	Bachelor of Arts
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CACHE	Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education,
DCE	Diploma in Childcare and Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DES	Department of Education and Science
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
FD	Foundation degree
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
NCIHE	National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education
NNEB	National Nursery Examination Board
NS-SEC	National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate of Education
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

Chapter 1: Contextualising the Research

1.1 Introduction

As a lecturer and part-time degree final year manager in the institution in which this research takes place, I talked to women on part-time Foundation degrees about their experiences of studying and their accounts revealed individual narratives of personal and academic difficulty but with a *strong* emphasis on personal triumph and success. Many of these women entered higher-level study after gaps in their education or had difficult formal education experiences. Many worked full-time, had domestic responsibilities, and almost all entered into study with low levels of confidence and self-belief. Yet, I saw them leave the Foundation degree they studied feeling transformed by their experiences and ready to face the challenge of Bachelor level study. This made me want to know what they experienced and how this made them feel *better* students, *better* individuals and for some *better* mothers. I wanted to find a way to make sense of the women's personal negotiation of this process and I wanted to explore what success looked like and felt like for them as women as part-time learners as they experienced Foundation degree study and progressed on to a Bachelor degree. As I began my study, I discovered the work of Diane Reay who in '*A Risky Business? Mature Working-class Women Students and Access to Higher Education*' Reay (2003: 302) shows how structural and social intersections of women's subjective existence such as age, class, ethnicity, and parenthood create tensions between discourses of difficulty and possibility.

‘We catch glimmers of painful past experiences as well as exciting possibilities, struggles to survive alongside successes’.

This thesis is therefore an exploration of what this tension looks like and feels like for the women in my study. In order to achieve this, I use Foucault’s construct of *governmentality* and the tools of *technologies of power and self* through which to view the social, political and personal holding of power that creates and maintains social ways of existing. When used in this way *technologies of power and self* can expose how power within social categories of existence such as gender, age, class and ethnicity shape and mediate women’s experiences within higher education study in a variety of ways.

The *technologies of power and self* are not offered as binaries in this thesis but are used as tools of analysis to illustrate the form, function and mechanisms of power and, more specifically, individual responses to this. Within a Foucauldian account, power is fluid and relational; therefore, a universal application of binary notions of productive and repressive power does not afford a way of exploring the ambiguity and diversity of power that exists within the discourse that shapes women’s existence. For this reason, the two *technologies* are separated for analytical purposes within this exploration of power.

To explore the influence of power, this thesis draws on Foucault’s (1977, 1980, 1994) use of discourse as the connection of power and knowledge. In this definition, discourse as the connection of power and knowledge is more than language as it is the social rules, codes, signs, significations and patterns of behaviour created within political, social and personal arenas and institutions that

shape us as social beings. This is explored in more depth in Chapter 2, but the term is used to illustrate how the women in this thesis emerge as products of the discursive power that acts on them. Therefore, this study aims to show how social constructions created within and through discourse influence the way women participate within higher education.

To show the influence of power through discourse, this study explores women's experiences of Foundation degree participation and Honours' level transition within one institutional context. Focusing on Foundation degree transition in the same institution exposes the influence of discursive power on the individual without the additional concerns of 'dual sector' (further education to higher education) transition in which there is a geographic change and differences in learning culture (Bathmaker et al., 2008; Knox, 2005; McCune et al., 2010; Morgan, 2013). Therefore, the institution becomes a significant part of the discursive regime in which the women study. An example of this regime is the funding mechanism that constitutes productive forms of power by facilitating access to higher-level study for the women as participants on a Foundation degree. More details of this funding process are given in section 1.5 below.

1.2 Starting Points

In the introduction, I indicated my professional interest in this area of study but other reasons exist. One reason is the paucity of literature on this research area since it is acknowledged that part-time study is under researched (Callender and Feldman, 2009) and this is even more so when linked to aspects of transition

and female participation (Penketh and Goddard, 2008). Additionally, there is a need to understand the influence of studying for women who inhabit plural social and structural intersections of existence. This becomes more relevant when considering the intersection of gender, age and continued or lifelong learning (Webb et al., 2006). Therefore, as women are the majority consumers of part-time Foundation degrees (HEFCE, 2010; Mason, 2010) programme designers and policy makers need to consider the link between individual differences (gender, age, ethnicity, and class), lifelong learning, social justice, and claims of individual development if higher education is to reflect the reality of modern lives. This has increased relevance within neo-liberal concepts of education, as learning becomes more of an expected duty than a *choice* (Biesta, 2008b).

The targeting of particular types of students onto particular types of programmes and courses is a method of HE recruitment and is where Foundation degrees as qualifications have their beginning. The Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) introduced the possibility of a sub-degree, but Foundation degrees were not fully realised as qualifications until 2000-2001 (DfEE, 2000). Presented as vocationally orientated academic qualifications they were designed to address a skills shortfall, enable the wider workforce to compete in a global economy (Doyle, 2003), help widen participation in higher education and encourage lifelong learning (HEFCE, 2010). As a short-cycle stand-alone sub-degree, Foundation degrees are commensurate with level five within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (QAA, 2008).

Whilst Foundation degrees are viewed as raising the potential of the adult workforce, creating education as a resource for enhancing employability and social mobility, there is some scepticism as to their worth. They are seen as promoting the 'depreciation of credentials' (Ainley, 2003: 404), as creating unrealistic employment expectations (Morris, 2010) and of offering limited benefit to students (Gibbs, 2002). Yet, they are considered as beneficial in offering the possibility of personal empowerment (Bingham and O'Hara, 2007) and a potential democratisation of HE (Bowers-Brown and Harvey, 2004). Despite this mixed reaction, they are considered as successful in attracting a diverse constituency of learners with a year-by-year increase in students from nearly 4,000 students enrolling in 2001-2002 (HEFCE, 2007) up to an enrolment figure of over 100,000 students in 2010 (Longhurst, 2010). Additionally, HEFCE data from 2008-2009 shows women comprising the majority of part-time Foundation degree students (64%) and of these over 50% were aged over 30 (HEFCE, 2008-2009). This creates a discursive frame in which Foundation degrees appeal to women who are employed, have family commitments and enter into vocationally orientated professional qualifications.

1.3 Research Aim and Questions

1.3.1 Research Aim:

Whilst the introduction above provided an outline of the research and set out its underpinning rationale, this section presents the overarching aim of the research followed by the research questions identifying their focus in this study;

To explore the influence of power through discourse on the identity construction of women as part-time students as they transition from Foundation degree onto Bachelor level study within one vocationally focused higher education institution

1.3.2 Research Questions

The study sought to address the following research questions:

1. What factors contribute to successful transition between Foundation degree and Bachelor level study?

Factors in this question are those aspects of discourse possibly conducive to their ability to progress. This may be the development of internalised discourse, which increases self-efficacy, motivation and successful completion of the Foundation degree.

2. How do institutional structures function in the participation of women as part-time students who study on a Foundation degree and transition onto Bachelor level study?

As the students experience internal transition, this question is directed at the institution's discursive regimes that as funding processes, progression structures and academic protocols may influence their study and the stability of learning identities.

3. What are the micro influences of discursive power on the identity construction of women as part-time students who study on a Foundation degree and transition onto Bachelor level study?

This question seeks to explore how social and structural categories of existence such as class, ethnicity and age influence the participation of women as part-time students.

4. What are the macro influences of discursive power on the participation of women as part-time students who study on a Foundation degree and transition onto Bachelor level study?

This considers the influence of macro levels of power on the political intersections of women's existence, which may indicate the potential influence of neo-liberalism as a political and social discourse.

5. How do women as part-time students studying on a Foundation degree and transitioning onto Bachelor-level study experience power?

This question seeks to show how power can act as both productive and repressive within women's participation on Foundation degrees and transition. It seeks to show how this functions and considers the applicability of Foucault's construct of *governmentality* as a conceptual framework of power.

1.4 Identifying the Case and the Sample

The case is a cohort of women who have completed their Foundation degree and are transitioning onto Bachelor level study within a specific vocationally orientated HEI. The sample who comprise the case are 30 women, with 5 of these forming the 'heart of the case'. All inhabit a range of social categories of existence, study part-time and work either full or part-time. Miles and Huberman's (1994: 26) consideration of case design, further discussed in Chapter 4, influenced an approach to the study of the case based on identifying a 'heart of a case'. Figure 1 shows the sample as 30 women who experience progression from Foundation degree and transition onto Bachelor level study and the five women who were selected to form the 'heart' of this exploration with each providing an individual narrative of their experiences. Whilst the whole sample is explored within Chapter 4, the five participants who form the core exploration of this case are outlined below.

Figure 1: Sample Construction

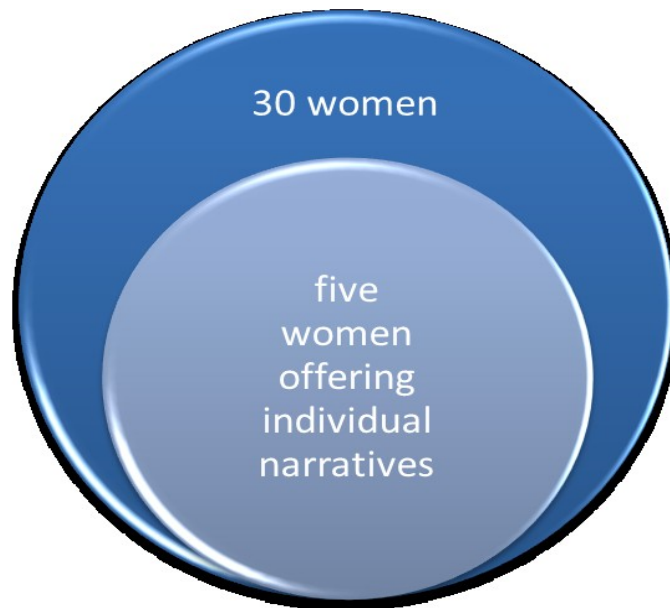


Table 1: Heart of the Case Interviews

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Employment	Declared Identifier
Kate	21	White British	Full-time Learning Support Assistant	Young Adult
Kate is the youngest participant within the research. She self-chose the identifier 'young adult' as she states she does not have the same roles and responsibilities as the other women in the study.				
Sue	30	White British	Full-time Teaching Assistant	Mother
Sue declares a learning difficulty that led to difficult relationships with education. She also reveals that her son has special needs and that she tries to spend as much time as she can with him to ensure he makes progress at school.				
Shabana	33	Asian British Bangladeshi	Full-time Teaching Assistant	Mother
Shabana had a baby in the second year of her Foundation degree and experienced post-natal depression. She managed to remain on the course and help her eldest child enter University.				
Ayesha	35	Asian British Pakistani	Full-time Teaching Assistant	Mother

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Employment	Declared Identifier
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Ayesha returned to study after a 15-year break. She found being on the Foundation degree academically challenging and this was compounded by studying part-time and being a wife and mother.

Parveen	32	Asian British Pakistani	Full-time Teaching Assistant	Mother
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Parveen was a child-minder before she decided to enrol on the Foundation degree. She is a wife and a mother but also takes care of a larger family that lives in Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

1.5 Host Institution Overview

As stated above, the women on the Foundation degree experience an internal progression and so the following section explores the host institution in which this takes place. I need to state that because of the specialised courses the institution offers, naming these could inadvertently disclose the institution so the generic term 'vocational courses' is used. This is relevant as the history of this institution begins in the late nineteenth century as a Technical School that offered a very narrow range of specialist vocational courses. It became a College in [REDACTED] and a Technology College in [REDACTED] when it came under the responsibility of the Local Educational Authority. In the 1950s and 60s it continued to grow, changing its name to reflect its programme expansion. In [REDACTED] it moved into its [REDACTED] location and changed its name yet again to reflect the diversification of the programmes offered. It continued just as a college of further education (FEC) before becoming a mixed economy provider in that it offered both FE and HE when the institution joined the HE sector in [REDACTED]. In [REDACTED] the institution

achieved taught degree-awarding powers and experienced a name change to incorporate this new HE position and in [REDACTED] full university status was awarded.

Diversity exists in this institution within the ages of students that attend because, as a mixed economy institution, it straddles both FE and HE offering dual sector provision, which means for many of the students there is an opportunity to move seamlessly from FE to HE. The age range taught within the institution begins at 16 but the end of this range is less well defined but it is well above the age of 21. There is very little mixing of age ranges but due to the specialist learning environments needed, some of the younger students study on the HE campus for the duration or parts of their study.

The programmes offered by the institution are also diverse with a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, diplomas and certificates through to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), Apprenticeships and National Diplomas. The diversity of the programmes is matched by the diversity of the entrance qualifications used to access these with approximately 60% of entrants accessing courses without A levels instead possessing a range of recognised vocational qualifications or industry/employment-gained experience.

Student Population

HESA data sets for this institution show that 98% of young, full-time undergraduate entrants were from state schools or colleges (2007/8) compared with a national average of 87.2% (2007/2009); 49.9% of entrants were from National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) classes 4-7 and

13.5% of entrants were from low participation areas. In terms of gender, nearly 67% of the HE students attending are recorded as female, reflecting current national trends (HEPI, 2014). Not surprisingly, a wider imbalance exists within the HE department the participants attend, with a peak in figures for the reporting period 2011/2012 showing 529 female and 55 male students of all students attending on a part-time pathway.

In the enrolment period 2012/2013, there was a marginal majority of white British students (52%) with the next largest ethnic groups identified as British Pakistani (11%), Black Caribbean (9%), British Indian (8%) and Black African (7%). These figures reflect the composition of the city and the local environment where the institution is based. Other general information sees student satisfaction as marginally above the national average but, significantly for the context of this research, those students on a Foundation degree pathway suffer a higher than average level of attrition (88% completing) in the first year but this stabilises in the second year with 98% completing. However, this figure does not differentiate between full-time and part-time participation.

One specific change in the cohort has been a recent (post 2011) decrease in the over 25-age range (HEPI Report, 2013; HESA data 2011/2012). According to HESA figures 2012/2013, there has been a steady decline in the numbers of mature students attending this institution. In 2010/2011, figures show 37% of the total student population were classed as mature and this fell to 30% in 2011/2012. The institution acknowledges that most part-time programmes (such as education and early years programmes) appeal to older learners. This has led

to a flexible approach to learning including what the institution terms 'sympathetic timetabling' and a newly developed shortened Bachelor degree programme for part-time students reducing completion timescales from two years to 18 months.

Funding Process

The women in this case study have benefited from an institutionally-created funding regime that in 2010 saw these women as Foundation degree students able to access and secure funding, thereby removing liability for the cost of their tuition fees at any stage of their course. This was not a tuition loan but a form of grant and, as such, this money was not repayable.

There were two tiers of funding protocol and process; the first began as a form of means testing within their application for Local Authority funding. Some students who had family residual incomes below £30,000 may have been able to secure the full cost of their tuition as part-time students from their Local Authority.

However, this did not cover the full cost of the tuition fees and so the institution was able to cover the shortfall. For other students whose family income exceeded the residual £30,000 limit and would therefore not be eligible for any Local Authority funding, the institution was able to cover the cost of their fees.

For this to happen, funding was found within the Institution's HEFCE teaching and research grant which, as a block grant, gives institutions a certain amount of freedom and flexibility to be used 'at their discretion' as long as it supports teaching, research and other related activities (HEFCE, 2008: 4). This grant is based on a formula that considers the institution's student numbers, the range of

specialist courses offered and the institution's student enrolment. The institution uses the funds allocated for recruitment and retention of students in order to meet the needs of the 'broad mix of students they recruit' (HEFCE, 2008:16). The women in this study were able to access funds for 'at risk' groups within HEFCE's acknowledgement of the additional costs associated with Foundation degree attendance. The funding offered to the students was a creative response to student need. The outcome of this funding policy was that from 2003 until 2012 no participants on part-time Foundation degrees had to pay for their tuition at this institution. As such, when other institutions saw their numbers reduce, this institution's numbers remained buoyant and it became a leader in offering a narrow and specific range of Foundation degrees. What this funding policy offers participants in this study is the removal of the burden of fees that may have reduced or denied their participation (Bowers-Brown, 2006; Hale, 2006; Tight, 2009).

1.6 Overview of Methodology and Methods

The thesis employs a case study design within a feminist paradigm and uses a mix of methods to explore a specific form of participation for a specific group of women in a specific context. Chapter 4 sets out in more detail how these methods reflected my insider research position (1.7) and adhere to my feminist principles (1.8). The research fieldwork occurred over one year and comprised three methods as outlined below:

Questionnaires: Submitted to 30 women as part-time students, the questionnaire functions to collect data from a wider sample and provide a range of demographic and attitudinal data that led to the emergence of concepts and themes that informed the case interviews. It is also a self-nomination structure so students could indicate their willingness to form the case interviews at the heart of the study. Of the 30 women who completed the questionnaire, 15 agreed to participate in the case interviews and of these, five were selected as they offered narratives that may add insight in to the experiences of the wider sample.

Case interviews: These individual interviews followed the questionnaire and five women were asked to produce graphic images that depicted their experiences of being on the Foundation degree. These images form the foundation of the case interviews and act as tools for graphic elicitation. These case interviews are individual, student-directed and designed to reveal rich and deep narrative data. Each case interview has two parts:

Part 1: The interview in which the women provide an image that helps to elicit a narrative account of their Foundation degree experiences. This interview was videoed, transcribed, analysed and presented in a tabular format so that it could be shared with participants.

Part 2: The table produced from the first interview is shared in a participant mediation interview in which my first analysis of the images the women created is negotiated for meaning and clarity. This interview also

asks them about their individual experiences of transition post Foundation degree completion.

Focus Groups: The final part of the research involves the five women who form the 'heart of the case' taking part in two focus groups undertaken one year apart. The first occurs upon the women's entrance onto the Bachelor degree with the purpose of exploring a collective case consideration of the women's experiences of being on the Foundation degree. The second focus group is held one-year later and is designed to have a specific focus on collective transitional experiences. It was designed in this way to provide meaningful narratives of group identity construction that may illuminate collective accounts and the influence of institutional discursive regimes.

1.7 Positionality and Reflexivity

Openly declaring my insider role is inherent in being an ethical researcher as is the adoption of critical reflexivity that acts as a mechanism of self-observance in the research process (Macbeth, 2001; Stanley and Wise, 1983). This is an important part of my research because, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, I have a professional relationship with the women in this study based on power and privilege, as well as being a researcher researching within my place of work. This becomes additionally significant because I declare a feminist empowerment intent within my research and such an intent could be problematised because of my declared and potentially power infused relationship to those I research. For some I was their Foundation degree programme

manager and for all, I was their 'top-up' Bachelor degree year manager. These roles meant I held a position of power and authority within their study but this influence was limited in as much as I did not set any timetables, choose, or apportion lecture rooms or lecturers and I did not set their assignments or oversee admissions on to the course. However, I will declare that I was a lecturer on their course and as such, marked their work and as their year manager, I collated their marks, discussed academic and personal concerns during tutorials and wrote references for both employment and further study applications. Therefore, I duly acknowledge this as a privileged and power-infused insider position (Gibbs et al., 2007; Trowler, 2011). This position also needs to be considered against my other categories of existence that may have some influence on my knowledge production. Like the women I studied, I am a part-time student who experiences a range of subjective positions. Therefore, I needed to be aware of these categories of self-identity when I analysed data and formed conclusions on the lives of others.

As stated above, power created by my position within the research may be problematic for my relationship with the research participants and the data collected. Therefore, understanding this power becomes a way of enhancing the study's credibility simply because without check, this relationship to the participants, the knowledge created and how it comes to be known compromises claims made. This is pivotal because as a feminist researcher, I believe that research on women and for women is a powerful gendered and emancipatory orientated goal of inquiry (Harding, 1982) but this is made complex when there are concerns about the location of and the influence and legitimacy of me as an

inquirer. As this study focuses on the power that exists within and on the lives of women my approach to it necessitated finding ways in which I could minimise the power and potential domination I held.

Reflexivity became a means of minimising this power and I propose that this study reflects a strong reflexive framework and draws on me as the researcher to create an ethical self as defined by Foucault (1980, 1994). This ethical self appears in the term 'conduct of conduct' as Foucault defines a way of using reflexivity as a form of self-governance through self-observance and management (Foucault, 2000). This ethical self-governance begins with my open recognition of my influence as one of power and authority (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003) and continues as a conduct of self in the steps taken to minimise my influence.

This attempt to minimise my influence is explored in more detail in Chapter 4, but I argue that choosing image-based methods was one way of trying to keep a familiar situation strange (Mannay, 2010; Trowler, 2011) and enable participants to have increased control over their narratives. As set out in more detail in Chapter 4, the application of a mediation process was designed to reflect mutuality but this attempt to create research empathy could be rendered problematic by my relationship. The format of the findings tables offered in Chapter 6 is another way that I have tried to mediate my influence in this research as the tabular format used illustrates my attempt to make the process of understanding the lives of the women I study as more visible and transparent.

1.8 Feminist Research

Adopting a post-structural feminist gaze means rejecting the construct of a *universal woman* and embracing the ambiguity and diversity of intersecting categories of *woman* and thus the multiplicity of power that exists within and between these categories. Social and political dominant discourse creates and shapes women's identity creating stratified and intersecting categories of gender, ethnicity, class, age, disability and sexual orientation (Walby et al., 2012). These categories become the template for social organisation and the way women are viewed and see themselves in the social world. Therefore, this way of thinking about the world influences my approach to the research placing the participants' voice as central to the research process (Letherby, 2003; Sarantakos, 2004). Therefore, to achieve this I tried to ensure that methods of data collection gave women a voice and could show them as potentially active within their life choices (McNay, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1983; Weir, 2013).

To undertake this research, I used the Foucauldian construct of *governmentality*, which affords an exploration of the role of discursive power within women's lives. I argue that post-structural feminism and *governmentality* work together by providing complementary constructs of subjectified existence. *Intersectionality as a post structural construct* allows me to see how social subject positions and structural intersecting forces influence women's study but in order to provide a strong analytical framework that enables me to articulate and display the working of power within a higher education context, I use Foucault's concept of *governmentality*. As explored in the introduction and in more depth in Chapter 2,

this construct comprises *technologies of power* in which *surveillance* appears as the main tool of analysis and *technologies of self* where the primary tool for recognising the function of power is *resistance*. These *technologies* are presented in this thesis as non-binariated analytical tools that help to understand the fluid, individual and relational nature of power. This fluid, relational and individual power is exposed by these tools at a *micro* level, which shows power targeted at women individually creating them as subjects of discourse, which potentially manifests its influence as *guilt, transgression and blame*. At a *macro* level, it is possible to consider the *grand* coercive influence of power as enacted through wider social and political discourse. This is explored as neo-liberal influences creating women as participating within, as Reay and Ball (1997: 89) state, 'neo-liberal individualism' in which Foundation degrees form part of a discourse of enhanced employability and economic, state-based needs (Fraser, 2013) but within heightened individual exposure to risk (Beck, 1992).

1.9 Thesis Structure

The structure of the thesis is outlined below:

Chapter 1: Contextualising the Research

This first chapter has provided the aim, rationale, research questions and overview of the case for this research. It outlined the methods used and provided a consideration of my role as an insider researcher additionally introducing an overview of my feminist research principles and Foucault's theoretical construct of *governmentality*.

Chapter 2: Understanding the Data: The Role of Foucault, Feminism, Power and the Self

Chapter 2 offers the theoretical framing of the research setting out Foucault's *governmentality* as an overarching structure to explore aspects of power and resistance. There is a consideration of the link between intersectional feminism and Foucault's *governmentality* and the chapter ends with an outline of how Foucault's construct of *governmentality* is used in this research to understand the data.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The review begins with a range of information presenting a clear outline of Foundation degrees as the qualifications on which the women study. This progresses into a consideration of literature that explores women as Foundation degree students within intersections of complexity and explores transition onto Bachelor level study. It explores the development of resistance and the influence of power within women's participation.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

In this chapter, the methodology and methods used in the research are presented. It provides a justification for the use of case study within an identified feminist paradigm and provides an overview of the case used in this thesis. It shows how data are analysed within Foucault's twin *technologies of power and the self*.

Chapter 5: Motivation, Preparation and Transformation: Questionnaire Analysis

This chapter provides findings from the questionnaire, which presents part-time students' attitudes to their Foundation degree, their motives for beginning study and for transition. It presents a layered account of being on the Foundation degree that shifts slightly upon transition onto Bachelor level study. The set of self-descriptors used as academic identifiers reveal a mixed consideration of students' ability as they progress.

Chapter 6: Staying Afloat: Individual Accounts of Power within Participation

The five individual narratives from women who are at the heart of the case are the focus of this chapter. The narratives collected identify critical moments experienced that were fundamental in supporting personal or academic identity whilst studying on the Foundation degree. Each narrative account begins with a small biography that places each woman's story within a real life context. Findings reveal the tensions within the participation of women between the difficulties they were exposed to and the way these could be resisted. These findings use a tabular format, which leads to an intertextual account of the data discussed under the two headings *technology of self* and *technology of power*.

Chapter 7: Collective Accounts of Power: Focus Group Analysis

This final findings chapter considers the results of two focus groups that show the five women from the case interviews coming together in two focus groups to explore a collective account of their experiences of moving from one qualification to another using the dual *technologies of self and power*. It finds that institutional discourse creates power that needs to be resisted in order to maintain their newly created academic and personal identities.

Chapter 8: Identity Creation as a Complex Interplay of Power and Resistance

This discussion chapter explores participation on the Foundation degree and subsequent progression within the dual framing of *technologies of self and power*. Academic and personal identities are constructed within a complex relationship of power and resistance to this power. Resilience emerges as a dispositional resistance mechanism that enables women to resist a range of external and internal influences on their participation. This resistance supports the development of a stronger focused self and, as such, functions as a technology of self since it aids women's ability to cope with and manage their experiences of being on a Foundation degree and transition onto Bachelor level study.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter presents the study conclusions indicating that Foundation degrees can act as a means in which women can create themselves as empowered, self-determining and transformed enabling them as students to feel they can transition on to Bachelor level study. However, this outcome is a consequence of the resistance these women display to power that influences and threatens their relationship with study. This section offers

implications for the research and identifies contributions made to knowledge. It ends with a consideration of the limitations of the research and with a final concluding comment.

Chapter 2: Understanding the Data: Foucault, Feminism, Power and the Self

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of Foucauldian accounts of power and introduces Foucault's theory of *governmentality*. Within this overview, the terms *technology of power* and *technology of self* are presented as tools that within the overarching concept of *governmentality*, help to understand the form and function of power within the identity construction of women as part-time students on a Foundation degree and as they transition on to Bachelor level study.

Foucault's two constructs of power are explored as an analytical toolset in order to describe and understand women's experiences on a Foundation degree and transition on to Bachelor level study. The chapter continues by indicating a link between feminism and Foucault that offers an alignment of intersectionality as a post-structural account of women's identity construction to Foucauldian accounts of discourse as subjectifying power.

2.2 Understanding Foucauldian Accounts of Power

To comprehend Foucault's theoretical construct of *governmentality*, there is a need to understand the personal form of power through discourse, which Foucault describes as *biopower* and how *discourse* is used as a conduit for power. Power for Foucault is the social, cultural, political and personal use of discourse that is used formally and informally to control individuals (Foucault,

1982). It controls all aspects of existence and being fluid and diverse, it moves controlling or regulating networks of interacting forces and structures. These networks are power-relations created between individuals, institutions or groups (Deleuze, 1988). As power is also relational and context-specific (Powers, 2007), the socially situated aspect of power means it is not one single and identical 'formula' (Foucault, 1980: 140) and thus as stratified and relational it influences people in different ways.

Fluidity is an important part of Foucault's conceptualisation of power as it is not only relational between people and institutions, but also capable of moving from the past to the present. This is where his use of the term *genealogy* has relevance since it is Foucault's way of explaining how the past influences the present not as a snapshot of experience, but as a web of ongoing self-perpetuating discourse (Kendall and Wickham, 1999; Powers, 2007). For Foucault (1972) *genealogy* is a charting of discourse (Danaher et al., 2000) that shows how power runs through discourses that occur over a period of time and in different contexts (Ramazanoglu, 1993).

Foucault's understanding of the overarching influence of power can be subdivided to show the macro and micro effects power has on the lives of individuals. This micro influence is *biopower* that, as a targeted and micro-focused power, shows how social, cultural, political and personal discourse acts on the micro-existence of the individual (Deveaux, 1994; Rabinow and Rose, 2003). Ultimately, this form of power influences people's lives, their bodies and the choices they can make (Rabinow and Rose, 2003). There are two words for

this concept; *biopower* is one and *biopolitics* is another; however, for consistency the term *biopower* is used within this thesis.

As signposted in Chapter 1, discourse is an imperative component of Foucault's construct of *governmentality*. Discourse as power emerges through signs, significations, rules, codes, behaviour and language creating as Allen (2011) states, the individual as always politically, socially and personally determined. Therefore, discourse is a subjectifying power that produces and maintains the social categories of race, gender and sexuality. These discursively created social categories set the boundaries of what it is to be a member of each category and significantly, what it is to be different. This becomes important as discourse as power creates and heightens difference. This difference may manifest itself as hierarchically ordered in creating some categories as more important. This hierarchy of difference is visible within constructions of class, ethnicity, gender or sexuality. However, it is the difference between and within categories of existence that defines the individual experiences of women. This means gender does not form a universal site of oppression as not all women have the same experiences of power. Therefore, the difference in women's social positions provides *different* types of knowledge within *different* sites of oppression. This understanding of the relational nature of discursive power indicates how the post structural account of Intersectionality can exist side by side with a Foucauldian account of *governmentality*. This exposes that a woman's relationship with power is what defines her identity (Burke, 2012; Archer, 2004; Sawicki, 1991; Jackson, 2004; Yuval Davis, 2006).

Statements or discursive formations are forms of collective discourse that are context-specific in fields such as education, politics and medicine. They define ways of behaving, thinking in and about these fields. They also define categories of people, form them as subjects and establish *truths* about them as subjects within society. Such a discursive formation appears in higher education discourse within discussions of the *new* and *traditional* student. In this formation, discourse categorises the identity and behaviour of the *new* student as different to that of the *traditional* student. When the word 'new' is linked to 'student' the discourse that surrounds this collocation creates a shortcut to understanding the identity of this student as different. Ultimately, when this discourse is accepted and embedded within the social world, it creates normalised identities. Within time, this discourse becomes a set of identity *truths* (McNay, 1992: 25) and from a gendered perspective, one such 'truth' emerging from this process of identity categorisation is one where women should prioritise their domestic responsibilities and their role as caregivers over their decision to study.

Discourses therefore structure and regulate people's relationships with society and with themselves (Foucault, 1977, 1980, 2000) creating 'norms, significations and constructions of personhood' (Fraser, 2013: 179). Within this understanding of discourse, recognition rules for existing within society and the codes of behaving and belonging become revealed as power infused and based on not wanting to be seen as outside of the discourse and therefore as not *normal*. Wanting to exist within social norms can create tensions when women who study are perceived as transgressing discursive constructions of 'normal' gendered behaviour.

2.3 Governmentality

This section provides an overview of the overarching construct of *governmentality*, which is a way of providing a structure for how power functions in the social world. As an overarching construct, *governmentality* contains tools that help comprehend how discourse governs individuals and their functioning in the social world. The construct of *governmentality* emerged from Foucault's (1964/2006) exploration of madness, in which individuals were monitored and labelled as healthy/unhealthy or normal/deviant based on their ability to operate within boundaries of behaviour. As a construct, this theoretical perspective illustrates societal and individual needs to identify, manage and regulate behaviour within social, political, cultural and personal discursive boundaries. In this way, *governmentality* helps to understand how the individual is managed in order to conform to social, political and personal discourse. Consequently, *governmentality* becomes a means of exploring the creation and maintenance of conforming and non-conforming identities.

Thus, *governmentality* becomes a pervasive regulation of conduct policed by social, political and especially self-generated mechanisms of surveillance. As a form of power, the micro-power of self-surveillance allows the individual to manage themselves and others by trying to keep within boundaries of socially defined behaviour (Foucault 1977; Burkitt, 2002). Therefore, power as exercised *by* and *on* others within surveillance and monitoring processes leads to domination and control (Foucault, 1980, 2000). Foucault presents the individual as a transmitter of discursive power in much the same way as the social realm or

the state (Foucault, 1980, 1994). In this way, the individual is able to wield discursive power on themselves and in so doing, reflect what Foucault (1977) defines as the efficiency of such power. .

Governmentality comprises two mechanisms of knowing and understanding power and as explored before, Foucault refers to these as *technologies of power* and *technology of the self*. To explain these terms in more detail, Foucault's word *technology* draws on the ancient Greek word *techne* to illustrate the means or methods of the production of knowledge (Burkitt, 2002; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982; Foucault, 1994; Weir, 2009). As Foucault (1994) explains in '*Sexuality and Solitude*' these are the methods that permit individuals;

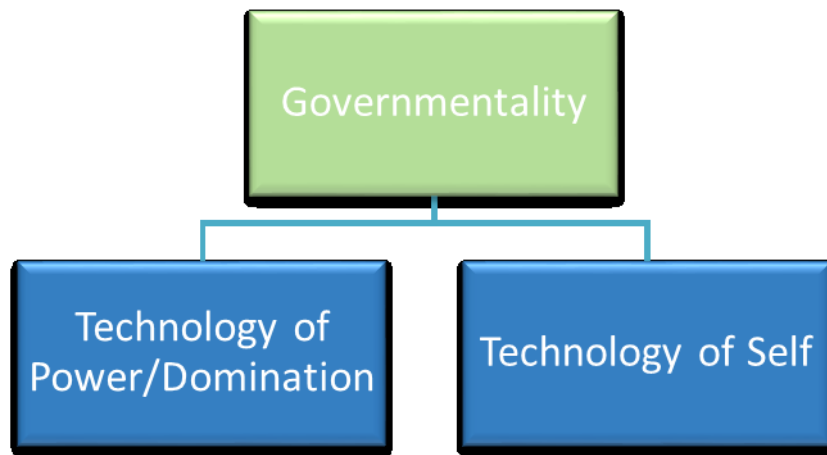
‘...to effect by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves...’
(Foucault, 1994: 177)

Interchangeable words exist for these terms; *technique* and *technology* but for consistency, the preferred term is *technology* as used in Foucault's (1977) key text, *Discipline and Punish*. Although, Foucault identified four technologies (Foucault, 1994) as Figure 2 shows, only two form the basis of his concept of *governmentality* and thus, appear in this thesis:

Technologies of the Self: the ability to transform the self

Technologies of Power: these determine the conduct of individuals and subjects.

Figure 2: Foucault's Construct of Governmentality



Technology of Self: This is where power can be productive as a *technology of self* is something that creates a personal change associated more with thought as an internalisation of discourse than action (Foucault, 1994). Resistance to power can be a *technology of self* as it creates the possibility of personal liberation and transformation. In this definition, a *technology of self* is something that leads to agency, self-determination and ultimately, a reinvention of the self (Caldwell, 2007).

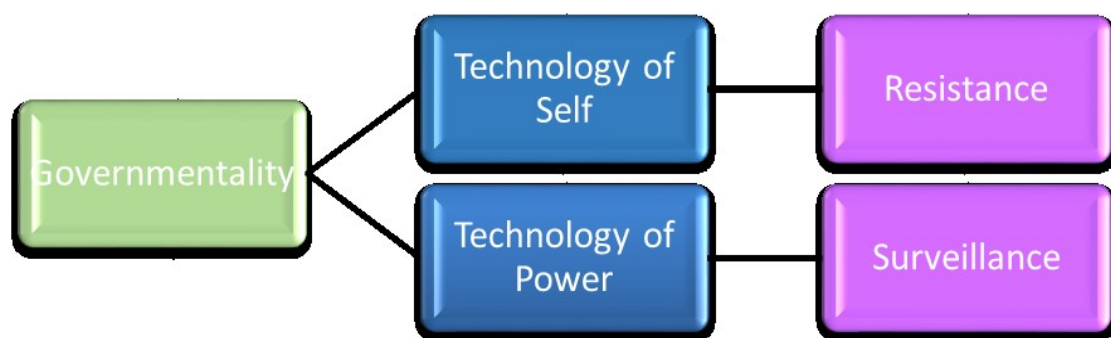
Technology of Power: This power is created within and through discourse that monitors and controls behaviour. It is repressive because it is a disciplinary power that supports the 'status quo' of power relations (Powers, 2007: 25). As a form of social surveillance, it functions to keep people in their place.

2.4 Using Foucault in the Field

Foucault offers a variety of ways in which to understand the flow of power within the social world and this section represents a short account of his theories of

power. Figure 3 displays *governmentality* as the overarching construct of power. From this overarching construct of social governance are the two *technologies* that show the different ways power functions. The following section explores these tools of analysis in more detail.

Figure 3: Governmentality as an Analytical Framework



The diagram in Figure 3 shows governmentality as offering a linear and clearly defined set of analytical parameters. In reality, these are not separate and discrete in their division of power and as stated in Chapter 1, these are not binaries of power. The relational and contextual nature of power that as individually experienced means that what is repressive for one person may not be for another. Therefore, the tools as indicated above provide an analytical perspective that helps to tease out individual responses and relationships to power.

2.4.1 Technology of Power: Repressive forms of Power

Surveillance

Surveillance is a process of monitoring and control and as such, it makes women experience power as 'normalising and coercive regimes' (Foucault, 1979: 19).

This surveillance becomes the way gendered subjectification is maintained and regulated (Weir, 2009). As indicated above, what Foucault (1977) indicates is the pivotal role of the individual in personal monitoring and control. When this occurs, this is self-surveillance and this self-watching has the potential to become a critical and comparative self-gaze applied to ensure boundaries of normalcy are not transgressed (Foucault, 1977; Sawicki, 1991; Weir, 2009).

Therefore, subjectification continues to exist because of the fear created by and within an individual as being identified as different can lead to claims of transgressive behaviour. The individual nature of this power is such that it may lead some women to remain passive, acquiescent and compliant (Foucault, 1980) and not wish to return to study.

This regulation of the self and others is the basis of Foucault's consideration of the stability of social classifications. As indicated above, it is easy to see why Foucault (1977: 137) defines this process as the absolute 'efficiency of power' as individuals take control, police and enact power on themselves. Effectively, when this happens women exert their own domination creating an unresisting critical gaze and becoming part of the complex machinery of power and regulation (Foucault, 1977: 137). The self-surveying individual becomes what Foucault

refers to as a panopticon as it exists as 'one (who) sees everything without being seen' (Foucault, 1980: 200). For Foucault (1977: 201), Bentham's (1843) notion of the panopticon as a prison that offers full visibility of the inmates is the epitome of effective power as surveillance is 'a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power'. In this way, the individual by engaging in self-surveillance keeps themselves and others within socially defined discursive categories of existence.

Transgression therefore works as a disciplinary mechanism that exists when there is an attempt to move outside socially constructed norms. A woman who returns to study when she has children may feel different to other women and may question her motives and 'right' to do this. This doubt and questioning exists as an example of a normalising gaze applied as self-surveillance. Therefore, for women who have children, who work full-time and make a decision to study part-time, feelings of transgression may emerge. These feelings of transgressive behaviour occur when the decision to return to study means stepping over the boundaries of 'normal' behaviour and it is the fear of being perceived as or feeling as transgressive that is a self-governing process. This process is the basis of political and social power (Rose, 1999) as it is the maintenance of social order.

One potential consequence of transgression and resistance to a dominant discourse is '*guilt*'. Therefore, it is possible to describe '*guilt*' as a psychic restraint and self-disciplinary mechanism, which is created by a process of discursive boundary crossing (Lucey et al., 2003; Skeggs, 1997; Reay, 2001,

2002, 2003; Walkerdine, 2003). When seen in this way '*guilt*' is therefore a battle between an internalised discourse of socially constructed identities and a new, desired and different version of the self. As a mechanism for self-punishment and self-regulation, these inner tensions may be a strong regulatory system on women within HE but as Foucault (1977) states, it is not a prohibitive one. Increased opportunity structures created by neo-liberal perspectives on lifelong learning and access to higher education may act as drivers encouraging women to transgress normalised categories of existence or to step out of their subjectivity and be more than they are created by their social structures and their past.

When considered in such a way, the choice to return to study may be imbued with feelings of self-monitored guilt and this guilt as a manifestation of power acts as *biopower* on women's attendance. Neo-liberalist policy as *biopower* makes the political personal as women become economic actors promoting 'individual and national well-being by their responsibility and enterprise' (Rose, 1999: 139). Foucault recognised the expansion of economic forces into the social realm and considered this as a pervading form of governance influencing the everyday lives of the individual (Hamann, 2009; Powers, 2007). Whilst individual well-being is a self-improvement discourse within HE participation, this increased visibility of the self creates new accounts of individualism and leads to a heightened awareness of risk and cost (Beck, 1992; Reay, 2003; Reay et al., 2002). Therefore, women who participate in HE within neo-liberalist policy discourse of widened and non-traditional participation, experience liberation and empowerment as illusionary rhetoric as women are never free of the barriers that restrain them.

There is complexity in understanding motivation for higher-level study within Foucault's theoretical perspective. Motives may exist as oppressive coercive forces but also as possible sites of personal resistance. Within a neo-liberal discourse, women can access Foundation degrees to be a more employable, qualified and well-paid individual creating these instrumental reasons as a strong motivational force. This modern employment rationality may therefore exist as a coercive force (Foucault, 1972) as saying *no* to this self-improvement is saying *no* to a powerful discourse of economic and social betterment. A woman who says *no* to Foundation degree participation says *no* to increased employability and to being 'bettered'. Therefore, policy that encourages people to be *more than* they are may indicate the potentially coercive nature of reengagement with study (Fejes and Nicoll, 2008).

A counter discourse exists to this totality of power within motives used by women that sees the risk of participating in higher-level study as a price worth paying for liberation. Risk is worthwhile when there is a possibility of resistance to dominant discourses. This possibility of resistance enables women to 'attain a certain mode of being' (Marshall, 2001: 85, citing Foucault, 1984) and the possibility of feeling liberated from repressive power. Therefore, policy discourse such as widening participation affords *risk* but with the possibility of *resistance*. *The balance of these two forms of power* leads to the hope or expectation of an imagined new self. As such a balance, it remains an individualised gamble on an uncertain future.

In this research, the *technology of power* explores the repressive functioning of power that may make HE study complex. It provides a framework for understanding the subjectifying force of discourse and sees women experiencing the effects of transgressing norms as 'guilt'. In addition, as an analytical tool *technology of power* provides a lens through which to explore the individual and relational influence of motives for study that can be potentially coercive but can also suggest the possibility of transformative outcomes.

2.4.2 Technology of Self: Productive forms of Power

Resistance

Just as the *technology of power* defines what women *should be* within discourse, then the *technology of the self* presents what women *can become*. Foucault (1980: 142) states that it is impossible to be outside of power but this 'does not make one trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what'. In this statement, he indicates the importance of resistance as a mechanism for challenging power as an individual action. Resistance is possible because power is not monolithic as there is not one 'massive and primal condition' of power but multiple sites that allow for acts of resistance as 'knots or focuses' that disrupt and challenge dominant discourse (Foucault, 1980: 142). This is the important concept as this makes power productive through processes of resistance and it creates practices or technologies of the self that lead to personal change.

Foucault (1980: 142) states 'there are no relations of power without resistances', which for Sawicki (1991: 43) means resistance is the underside to power as it exists in relationship to power. She states;

'...if relations of power are dispersed and fragmented throughout the social field, so must resistance to power be.'

If power shapes identity then so does resistance as it offers the potential for social and personal liberation within repressive forms of power (Billett, 2010; Foucault, 1980). Understanding processes of change within Foucauldian theory resides in recognising that resistant identities are those that offer an alternative discourse to their own creation (Weir, 2009). This ultimately means that *if* resistance is successful, it *may* lead to the creation of self-determined and transformed individuals. Although, Foucault provides an understanding of a dominant discourse that regulates and manages identities, he also provides a means of seeing the power that runs through this discourse as something that can be resisted and thus productive of a new way of being (McNay, 1992; Ramazanoglu, 1993). Therefore, the ability to resist power through discourse is how Foucault conceptualises constructs of individual agency.

As seen in the section above (2.4.1), motivation acts as a dynamic and powerful set of forces that whilst potentially coercive can also support the desire or will for personal transformation. It does this as it propels participants to begin study and, when studying, to feel able to resist a raft of potential difficulties. This resistance when seen in motivational terms emerges as constructs of self-efficacy and self-confidence that provide an internal dialogue that leads to the creation of an inner

narrative that is both desiring and cognisant of personal change (Burkitt, 2002). In this account of power, motivation to change also resides in resistance to past narratives and becomes a way of renegotiating past relationships to learning. When this happens, it allows the individual to breaking free of the self-monitoring discourse these historical accounts of learning contain. Foucault defines these narratives as *genealogies* of the past and motivation to change means wanting to challenge or challenge this past to be something or someone different. Therefore, it is possible to conceive of motivation as a drive that leads to a reconceptualisation of personal freedom and the liberation of the individual (Weir, 2013). This reconceptualisation of personal freedom creates change, which when sustained and based on self-evaluation, forms the basis of self-transformation.

For Foucault (1978, 1994), transformation has to be or feel authentic in order for a potential change to have meaning or permanence. Therefore, it is plausible to consider authenticity within transformation as a state in which women feel true to themselves and more specifically, they feel that they are able to relate who they are now to their past (Soper, 1993). For Reay (2002: 411, citing Heidegger, 1962: 117), authenticity is the 'loyalty of one's self to its own past, heritage and ethos' and this suggests that true transformative change happens when it makes personal sense, has meaning and legitimacy. Certainly, Dean (2003:195) considers authenticity within transformation as establishing a new harmony in what he refers to as the 'Foucauldian triangle of truth, power and the self'. Presented in this way, feeling authentic is about being true to the self and therefore has to be at the heart of lasting and meaningful transformation.

Within this thesis, *technologies of self* act as a tool that affords an opportunity to understand possibilities, locations and opportunities for potential self-determination, resistance to dominant discourse and authenticity within a transformation of self. This means it has a useful role in exploring how the individual responds to power through discourse as experienced in their study and how they are able to operationalise mechanisms of personal and academic development and create a personal understanding of transformation.

2.5 A Feminist Approach to Foucault

This final section is a consideration of Foucault within a third wave feminist perspective that shows complementarity with intersectional perspectives of women's identity creation. Understanding power through *governmentality* affords insight into the role of discourse as the transmission of power that can 'incite, provoke and produce' the individual as subject through a process of subjectification (Deleuze, 1988: 60). To clarify this Foucauldian view of identity, the individual is created as a subject through discourse, institutional practice and ideologies (McNay, 1992; Danaher et al., 2000).

Discourse, when seen in this way, suggests a close alignment to feminist intersectionality as both Foucault and post-structural feminists see women created within discursive regimes that create, shape and stratify social relationships by gender, ethnicity, class, age, disability and sexual orientation (Walby et al., 2012). These categories become logics of social organisation (Skeggs, 2004) leading to the possibility of seeing these discursive accounts of

identity function as interlocking or intersections of existence (Crenshaw 1991), 'categories of signification' (Phoenix, 2006: 189), or 'multiple inequalities' (Choo and Ferree, 2010: 130) that create a 'multidimensionality' of existence (Crenshaw, 1989: 139). Therefore, understanding intersections of identity and subjective positioning can show how individuals function in the social world. One of the strengths of this intersectional theory of identity construction is not the number of categories, but the *nature* of the difference between them as this underpins individual identity construction and the power experienced by this individualised account in the social realm (Burke, 2012). For Choo and Ferree (2010: 131) this becomes a set of 'complex configurations' within identity creation.

It is worth clarifying the term as used in this study, as there are differences within ways intersectionality is understood. Museus and Griffin (2011:7) differentiate between forms of *intersectionality as does* McCall (2005: 1771) who suggests *intersectionality* is the intersection of 'multiple social dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations' and also Crenshaw (1991) who uses the term *structural intersectionality* to describe 'social systems that shape the experiences of and sometimes oppress individuals'. Like Museus and Griffin, I refer to the generic term *intersectionality* to illustrate intersections of existence but where necessary the term is differentiated to indicate intersections of political, social and structural systems of power.

Viewing identity from this intersectional perspective creates a shift from an essentialised woman to one in which women exist within multiple marginalised

identities and private and public webs of countless complex relations (Choo and Ferree, 2010; McCall, 2005). This fragmentation of the category *gender* increases the visibility of multiple positions within everyday life and the power relations central to this (Phoenix, 2006; Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Burke et al., 2013). Therefore, from a Foucauldian and intersectional account, subjectivity emerges out of the interrelationship between power and discourse, shaped by historical experiences and social, political and cultural practices (Jackson, 2004).

Some feminists may find this linkage of feminism and Foucault an uneasy alliance as Foucauldian accounts of power are often criticised as being weak (Deveaux, 1994; Hartsock, 1987). Some discuss the questionable relevance of Foucault within a feminist paradigm (McNeil, 1992; Fraser, 1997; McLaren, 2002) and situate this debate within his negation of gendered power by his decentring of gender. In making it just one category of existence he is accused of failing to provide a theory of power for women that affords the potential for agency and emancipation. It is this perceived depoliticisation of gender (McLaren, 2002; McNeil, 1993; Ramazanoglu, 1993) that leads Hartsock (1987: 165) to claim that Foucault's lack of acknowledgement of the 'unequal relations of power' means women remain as docile, passive and accepting of a disciplinary and male-formed power (Hartsock, 1987; McNay, 1992).

Yet significant here is this decentring of gender emerges an essential component of post-structural feminism since gender in this perspective is not a single axis of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). Foucault's response to this debate concerning the power exerted on women is evident in his move away from binary conceptions of

gender (Gayman, 2011) and towards power as relational, contextual and individualised. This is realised in his conceptualisation of *biopower* as explored above. Similarly, post structural feminists embrace the deconstructed nature of women's identity by adopting new accounts that eschew universal, univocal, homogenised and ethnocentric narratives of women and open the way for racialised, classed, aged and structural accounts of women's lives (Crenshaw, 1991; Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006; Choo and Ferree, 2010).

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter set out the Foucauldian theoretical framing for the research. This necessitated an overview of the construct of *governmentality* and a contextualising of the *technologies of power* and *self* within a feminist paradigm. Mechanisms of power through discourse were exposed showing how these can regulate and influence the participation of women on a Foundation degree and were discussed in relation to the research. The following chapter is a review of the literature that explores the design and creation of Foundation degrees, mechanisms of progression and the participation of women within higher education.

Chapter 3: Women on Foundation degrees and Experiences of Transition onto Bachelor Level Study

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with information on Foundation degrees that provides a context and outlines their design, construction and intentions. Foundation degrees are explored as self-standing qualifications within the field of vocational education and training qualifications and data are presented that show the diversity of student participation on such degrees and the diversity of institutions that deliver them. Women are explored within the context of Foundation degree participation and within processes of transition onto Bachelor level study, which is presented as temporal constructions of *being* and *becoming* within the influence of academic, physical (environmental) and emotional change.

3.2 Foundation Degree: Design and Function

This section extends the overview offered in Chapter 1 showing Foundation degrees within neo-liberal accounts of lifelong learning, social justice, enhanced employability and personal development. As stated, Foundation degrees were introduced in 2000 (DfES, 2000) to provide an increased number of high-quality graduates deemed necessary to address shortages in particular technical and vocational skills. As government-initiated qualifications, they had a clear set of intentions that, as well as addressing the shortage of intermediate level skills, were intended to be part of the widening of participation in HE and contribute to lifelong learning (Doyle, 2003; HEFCE, 2000). As Wilson et al. (2005) state,

Foundation degrees were aimed at students from under-represented groups and designed to offer an entrance route into higher level learning for those possessing vocational qualifications. As Foundation degrees were qualifications existing within an enhanced employability agenda, they had to be flexible in design and delivery to enable students to 'earn and learn' (HEFCE, 2000: 5)

Meeting a perceived skills gap created an explicit link between HE and employment and this is seen within the White Paper (2003: 16, 1.24) the Future of Higher Education as the worker created as student is required to 'refresh their knowledge, upgrade their skills and sustain their employability'. As a qualification that aims to 'ensure that higher education develops the skills, attitudes and abilities that employers need, as well as meeting the wider aspirations of individuals and society' (DfEE 2000:1.3), Foundation degrees reflect New Labour's (1997-2010) neo-liberal alignment of state economy needs and the individual (Field, 2000; Doyle 2003; Fraser, 2013) reflecting utilitarian accounts of participation.

As Foundation degrees have developed over time, they have become increasingly diverse in their construction, place, type of delivery and subject area so it is difficult to identify a one-size-fits-all account (Ooms et al., 2012). The benchmark statements define what Foundation degrees should be, as such, they should be accessible, have an articulation and progression route and there should have employer involvement (QAA, 2010). Specifically as learn and earn qualifications they have to be flexible to meet a wide range of learners in diverse learning contexts (QAA, 2010). Using these attributes as a foundation for a

generic description portrays Foundation degrees as short-cycle qualifications taking a minimum of two years full-time to complete. Part-time routes can take longer but this varies by institution and can be as long as three years (HEFCE, 2010). As a higher education qualification, a Foundation degree can be delivered within further education colleges and higher education institutions, but regardless of where they are delivered they rely on the involvement of and collaboration with employers (DfES 2000). Although Foundation degrees are vocational in intent, they offer a blend of vocational and academic study to provide knowledge, skills and understanding needed for a competitive global workforce (DfES 2007).

Foundation degrees exist within a range of intermediate-level vocational education and training (VET) qualifications (Webb et al., 2006); however, the choice they created is discussed as complicating employers' and students' perceptions of the range of qualifications needed for employment (Little et al. 2003). Greenwood et al. (2008) discuss this complicating of qualification choice as fuelled by a lack of clarity in the aim and role of Foundation degrees within HE. Despite these claims, Foundation degrees remain as distinctive qualifications that exist as 'self-standing qualification of specific value' (QAA, 2014: 3, 1.2) and worth 240 credits (120 each at each level of completion) this credit accumulation can count towards a full Bachelor's degree (360 credits).

All Foundation degrees have the requirement of progression onto honours level study embedded within their design (QAA, 2014) and in this they are seen as contributing to higher and wider participation in HE by providing an accessible entry route to Bachelor level study and onto other professional qualifications

(HEFCE, 2007). This progression route is called a 'top up' degree as it affords completion of a full Bachelor degree. For some, this is a purpose-written, single year degree (full-time is one year, part-time is two) (Dismore et al., 2010; Penketh and Goddard, 2008) or an existing Bachelor degree programme that is entered in the final year of study. This is the case for the students in this thesis, but there is a requirement within the Foundation degree benchmarks to ensure that students entering onto the next level of study are adequately prepared (QAA, 2014). To meet this expectation, institutions are required to offer a bridging programme or module that supports transition or provides some form of summer school (Wilson et al., 2005).

Pedagogy

The descriptors below are statements taken from the Foundation degree benchmarks (QAA, 2010: 12, 42) that illustrate the academic and vocational attributes students should be able to demonstrate upon completion of their Foundation degree.

- knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles in their field of study and the way in which those principles have developed
- effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non- specialist audiences and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively in their field of study and in a work context

First published in 2002, Foundation degree benchmarks provide a set of statements that form a comparative measure to ensure that the characteristics and attributes of Foundation degrees remain consistent within their design and

delivery. The benchmark statements indicate the need for a balance between intellectual and practical skills that Rowley (2005) describes as appearing as a blend of learning, teaching and assessment strategies with a vocational rather than academic focus. Although there is a strong emphasis on vocational competence as a desired outcome, there is also a need for this to be within 'appropriate academic rigour' (QAA, 2010: 6, 21). Penketh and Goddard (2008) describe this rigour within the Foundation degrees they offer as providing vocational experience but securely underpinned by theoretical application all integrated into the assessment process. According to Ooms et al. (2012), this linkage of theoretical and practical knowledge presents Foundation degrees as innovative programmes that reflect a transformative shift in meeting students' learning and employment needs. Such a blend of learning outcomes is considered a flexible pedagogy (Dixon et al. 2005) and as meeting a diverse range of learning styles, it facilitates students' higher-level learning (Canter, 2006).

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is diversity within the taught delivery of Foundation degrees, literature suggests that teaching occurs within smaller groups (Morgan, 2013) creating more 'close knit', informal and more discursively based learning environments (Simm et al., 2006: 5). Although it is acknowledged that most of Tinto's research is based on younger American students, his work challenges binaries of dependent and independent learning focusing on the creation of learning communities and cultures. Like Bruner (1996), Tinto presents an effective pedagogy for learning as one that is communicative and based on knowledge sharing. This is seen in Tinto's (2003:1) pleas for reduced 'faculty

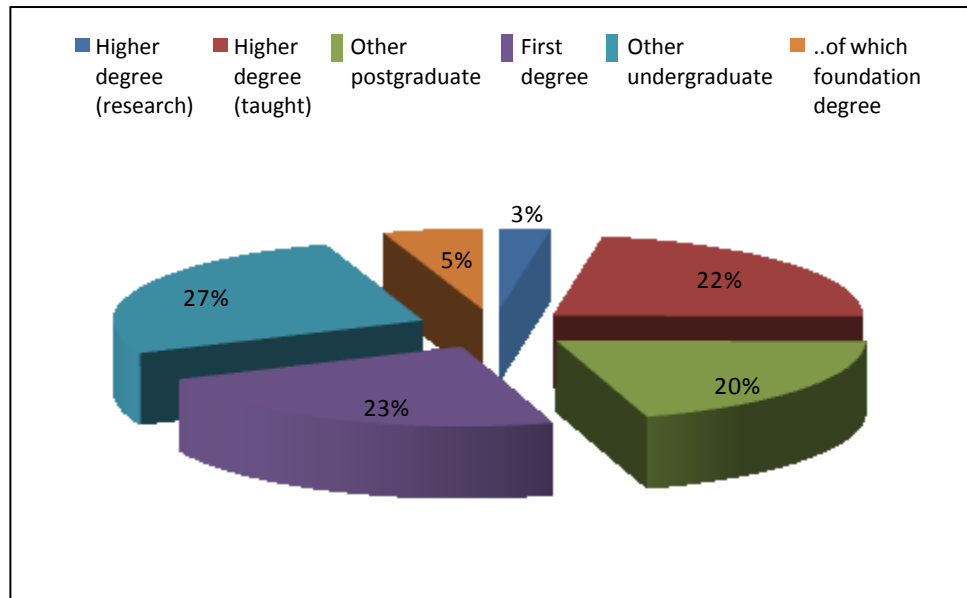
talk' leading to more shared and collaborated knowledge seen as creating *interdependent* learners. Interdependent learners demonstrate persistence within study, which Tinto (1993) links to levels of collaboration and collegiality that enhance students' academic and social integration. This can be evidenced within Burke et al.'s report of pedagogy (2013) as the interdependency created by the learning environment as crucial in determining the development of students' identities as learners. This is also addressed by Crozier and Reay (2011) and by Hodkinson et al. (2007) and this interdependent pedagogy potentially created through vocational and academic integration of skills, may be why there is evidence of student satisfaction of Foundation degrees. Harvey (2009: 44, citing Foundation Direct, 2008) presents student satisfaction as being 88.1% according to respondents to a Foundation Direct (2008) survey who were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of their course. Additionally, the survey revealed that 94.6% felt that the Foundation degree studied had provided new knowledge and 83.7% identified the development of study and learning skills.

Student Participation

HEFCE's (2010) report on Foundation degrees *Foundation degree Key Statistics 2001-02 to 2009-10* traces the continual increase in student participation and entrance onto Foundation degrees. Using the term *entrants* to define students who enter onto the programme rather than those already studying as students, participation has risen from 3,999 in 2001-2002 to 53,750 in 2009-2010. For part-time participation, this figure shows the same steep rise as in 2001-2002 where 1,740 entrants increased with a specific leap in attendance in 2005-2006 to

9,850 entrants. Figures for 2009-2010 show entrance at 19, 955 but there are gendered differences in this participation as in 2008, the part-time cohort comprised 64% of women studying part-time, a much higher figure than for men (36%). There are age differences between full and part-time Foundation degree participation with 55% aged 30 and over in 2008-2009. In addition, HEFCE's figures show that there are fewer minority ethnic students studying part-time than full-time. However, whilst significant in placing entrance onto Foundation degrees in a context of increasing expansion, these percentages should be seen in a wider HE participation context. This context is provided by HESA data from 2013/14 and whilst this does not show entrants into HE, it reveals the number of awards made to completing HE level students. This shows there were 777, 800 qualifications awarded at HE level to students enrolled on full-time or part-time courses and of this number, 18,930 were Foundation degrees, which makes this qualification just 2.4% of the total awarded. When full-time study is excluded from the data from HESA (2013-2014), Figure 4 shows Foundation degrees offer 5% of part-time awards. Therefore, they are a very small part of a much larger account of HE, but in their design intentions and objectives they form a large part of a blended social justice and neo-liberal agenda.

Figure 4: HE Qualifications Awarded to Part-Time Students Adapted from HESA(2013-2014)



In terms of ethnic diversity on Foundation degrees, Mason's (2010) figures from HESA 2007-2008 show that 79% of part-time students are White, 2% are Black or Black British-Caribbean and 3% Black or Black British-African. From these data it is clear that Asian ethnicities are less well represented with 2% Asian or Asian British-Indian, 1% Asian or Asian British-Pakistani and 0.4% Asian or Asian British-Bangladeshi. Harvey (2009) states that minority ethnic groups account for about 15% of Foundation degree students, but this rises to 19% for full-time students. However, explaining minority ethnic participation is complex as Noden et al. (2014) state, black and minority ethnic groups go to university in relatively good numbers but it is where they go that is significant. An imbalance of minority ethnic students within certain types of institutions is identified by

Smith (2007) reinforcing the connection with ethnicity and university stratification (Ball et al., 2002).

Institutional Diversity

Foundation degrees are claimed to blur the boundaries of further and higher education (Webb et al., 2006) and this has more meaning when it is considered that not all Foundation degrees are taught within HEIs. Therefore, Foundation degrees can be delivered solely in FECs, but also within a blend of the sectors in which HEIs and FECS exist as single or dual-sector 'mixed economy providers' (Bathmaker et al., 2008: 125).

To reflect the diversity of Foundation degree delivery, HEFCE (2010) provide data from 2006-2007 in which 51% of Foundation degree delivery occurs only in HEIs and 20% occurs only in FECs. There are some interesting hybrids within this account of delivery as Foundation degrees can be registered in one provider (HEI) and delivered in another (FEC) accounting for 26% of the total delivery. Finally, 3% of part-time Foundation degree delivery occurs as registered with a HEI but taught jointly in both the HEI and FEC. The diverse delivery of Foundation degrees and the discourse that surrounds types of institution and pedagogical difference explains the interest in transitional experiences from Foundation degrees onto Bachelor level study, but also explores the complexity of these qualifications within HE discourse.

Part of this HE discourse is the role of institutional hierarchy and stratification that places one institution over another by virtue of its age, research status and

the type of students it recruits (Archer, 2007). This is often presented within binaries of elite and non-elite institutions in which there is a preponderance of Foundation degrees delivered within non-elite, post 1992 or FEC delivery. As shown above, 51% of Foundation degrees in 2006-2007 were delivered in HEIs but as HEFCE (2010) data show, in the year 2006-2007 out of a possible total of 369 institutions that deliver Foundation degrees, 24 were pre-1992 institutions (elite), 70 were post 1992 (non-elite) and the majority 275 were delivered in FECs. Seemingly, indicating the intersection of class, gender, institutional choice and qualification (Brine and Waller 2004; Leathwood, 2004).

Finally, as participation in the qualification has increased in number, so has the range of subjects offered to these participants. Ooms et al. (2012) state that there are 25 subject areas having 1,700 different Foundation degrees and that there are nearly 900 more in development, indicating a consistent market for these qualifications.

Access

One of the main features of Foundation degrees is the accessibility of the entry criteria for a wide range of students. As qualifications, they have an UCAS entry tariff lower than for Honours degrees as students who enter Foundation degree programmes are more likely to do so using diverse and less standard entry qualifications (QAA, 2005; Simm et al. 2006). The Schwartz Report (2004) *Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice* recognised the diversity of qualifications used to access HE and identified the

role that Foundation degrees play in ensuring students with a range of vocational qualifications had 'fair access'. HEFCE's analysis of the 2005/06 cohort of part-time students attending HEIs and FECs, indicate the diversity of qualifications used to gain entrance. They identified 26% of students held HE credit-bearing qualifications; 24% had A levels or equivalents; 32% had a qualification defined as 'other' and a substantial number (18%) were unknown. York Consulting (2004) stated a large percentage of part-time entrants held National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 3 qualifications, with lower percentages having level 2 and 1 qualifications. This figure is commensurate with Mason's (2010) data generated by HESA Student Record 2009/10 that identifies 55.2% of part-time students have A Levels or NVQ equivalents. Whilst data are not provided here indicating sub-dividing intersections of class, gender and ethnicity, there is evidence to suggest that under-represented groups are more likely than traditional students to apply to enter HE using vocational qualifications (Sutton Trust, 2008).

Foundation Degrees and Niche Participation

An overview of the programme design is provided in appendix 1 but to place the participants of this thesis into a relevant context, the Foundation degrees they study as vocational qualifications are linked strongly to their employment and vocational practice. The women as students in this thesis have completed the Foundation degree Professional Studies in Early Years and the Foundation degree Professional Studies in Learning, which places them as engaging on a *niche* qualification pathway. It is defined as *niche* because it is specifically

targeted at Teaching Assistants (TAs), Learning Support workers and those managing and supervising Nursery provision (PriceWaterhouse Coopers 2002). This *niche* means that two-thirds of part-time Foundation degree participation occurs in subjects aligned to 'education studies' (Harvey, 2009).

Foundation degrees as associate level qualifications are designed to meet a technical and vocational skills shortage function to create public sector para-professionals (Wilson et al. 2005). This is visible in the Early Years sector endorsed Foundation degree that showed the importance of Foundation degrees in supporting the continuous career development of those working in this sector (Edmond et al. 2007; Snape and Finch, 2006) as initiated within the National Childcare Strategy Green Paper (DfEE, 1998). O'Keefe and Tait's (2004) comprehensive review of the development of sector-endorsed Foundation degrees shows how these qualifications increased the numbers of women on Foundation degrees as they offer the potential for personal or professional enhancement whilst offering the individual an opportunity to invest in both themselves and the state (Fenge, 2011; Tierney and Slack, 2005).

Constructs of Worth and Value

Constructs of worth and value are complex considerations when exploring the benefits of Foundation degrees to students. Foundation degrees as qualifications have mixed reviews when their quality and value for money are considered (Canter, 2006). Part of the debate resides within the financial return gained by students attending HE, which, known as the *graduate premium*, reflects the difference in lifetime earnings for graduates as compared to non-graduates (BIS,

2013). Whilst the White Paper (DfES, 2003a, 7.21) claimed that, on average, those with a higher education qualification earn around 50% more than non-graduates, Foundation degrees are said to return much less (Archer, 2007; Greenbank and Hepworth, 2008). This reduced return is exacerbated by the influence of place of study, gender age and mode of study (Jamieson et al., 2009).

Foundation degrees have been described as second class or 'Mickey Mouse' degrees and 'not quite HE' (Archer, 2007, citing Margaret Hodge, 2003: 645). This narrative is indicative of discourse that surrounds Foundation degrees and suggests that in terms of worth, what they offer is a further diluting of social justice and widened access policy. Yet a counter discourse exists in which Foundation degrees exist in adult education as a lever for empowerment and emancipation (Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Baxter and Britton, 2001). As degrees, they enable students to develop personally and professionally (Yorke and Longden, 2010) and in so doing build self-confidence, encourage independence and allow students to demonstrate flexibility and adaptability (Stuart-Hoyle, 2007). They are also a means to encourage students to return to study which, within a consideration of lifelong learning, could lead to the potential benefits of enhanced employability, self-reliance, empowerment and flexibility of life choice (Berglund, 2008). As qualifications, they provide access to higher-level learning for those previously unable to gain access (Craig, 2009; O'Doherty, 2006). HEFCE (2007) state many older part-time students would not have entered higher education without the development of Foundation degrees.

Therefore, Foundation degrees can be a form of empowering liberal education in which personal enlightenment and development remain the end goals (Molesworth et al., 2009; Longhurst, 2010). However, within a neo-liberal agenda this development needs to be considered within an employability discourse in which the primary role of the Foundation degree is to secure better employability for the individual and better-qualified workers for the state (Doyle, 2003).

3.3 Women on Foundation degrees

Relatively few studies explore Foundation degree participation and transition to Bachelor level study for women as part-time students. Literature of some quantity explores the role and function of Foundation degrees, but this often uses a mixed gender sample (Morris, 2010), does not explore the complexity of part-time study (Burke et al., 2009), or explores participation within an FEC context, focusing on a specific aspect of Foundation degree design (Fenge, 2011).

Research that covers a gendered account of part-time Foundation degree participation and transition is rare. Penketh and Goddard (2008) provide one such account with a critical consideration of women on a Foundation degree who transition onto Bachelor level study mostly within the same institution. One of the important outcomes of this research is the term 'beset by trials' used by Penketh and Goddard (2008: 321) to locate the intersection of women's non-student identity with that of student and specifically one who has completed a Foundation degree and is about to enter Bachelor level study. Penketh and Goddard (2008) use the phrase 'beset by trials' as a potent discursive term for the experiences of women who participate on Foundation degrees. However, this term becomes a

‘catch-all’ for the complexity of women’s study, one that does not consider the structural intersectionality of gender, class, age and ethnicity as identified by Reay (2003), Skeggs (1997), Archer (2007), Walkerdine (2003) and Walby et al. (2012). All present women as produced within discursive regimes that create powerful intersections of ethnicity, class, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender and this emerges within the experiences of women as they return to study.

As stated in Chapter 2, women’s identity in this thesis is viewed through a post-structural lens as something deconstructed or disarticulated and created through discursive power (McRobbie, 2009). Therefore, in order to understand the experiences of women who study, there is a need to consider personally, socially, culturally and politically-defined categories of existence that are created by a power-infused discourse that runs in every way in the everyday lives of women (Rabinow and Rose, 2003; Venn and Terranova, 2009). Subjectivities such as gender, class, ethnicity and age form the cornerstone of much research on women in HE (Arnot, 2002; Bowl, 2003; Brooks, 2012; Crossan et al., 2003; Crozier et al., 2008; Hewitt et al., 2010; McCune et al., 2010; Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Reay, 2003; Reay et al., 2002; 2010; Skeggs, 1997; Wainwright and Marandet, 2010). Whilst most of this research explores the *big three* of race, class and gender (Bagihole, 2009) there is an increasing realisation of how these structural forces are intersected with the intersection of social categorisations manifested in everyday realities in the subjective positions of wife, mother and carer, employee and student (Dunne et al., 2008). Creating an intersectional account of Foundation degree participation necessitates finding a specific

linkage of class, qualification and gender and this emerges in research that considers education within a knowledge-driven economy as inherently classed, gendered and raced (Leathwood and Archer, 2004; Reay, 2002; Walker, 2008; Webb et al., 2006).

Whilst oppression exists within power-infused subjectifying categories, it is important not to homogenise women who participate on Foundation degrees and present them all as working class, minority-ethnic, mothers and disadvantaged. This categorisation does not include middle-class, white and single women of whom there are many accessing Foundation degrees. It is clear that not all women have additional caring roles and for Byrne (2003) this can leave single women feeling stigmatised and invisible in social groups by their inability to refer to external referents such as wives, mothers and carers when these become important markers of identity. Additionally, focusing on working class creates the illusion that being middle-class is a protection from external influences on study and decision-making in study. Reay et al. (2002) accepts that middle-class students also experience delays in their participation and access HE using alternative routes into study. The following sections offer some of the intersections experienced by the women in this study. I acknowledge the lack of a category of ethnicity, not because it is not significant in this research, but because it is deeply embedded within other structural categories of existence.

Gender

For women who study, the influence of gender reveals itself most clearly within the intersection of domestic/care-giver responsibilities and study (Brooks, 2012; Reay et al. 2009; Ross et al., 2002). As Bowl (2001: 143) states, for women;

‘..family lives and concerns are not merely the background against which their educational careers develop, but are integral to their experience of higher education study’.

When women begin their Foundation degree study, many experience additional and increasing conflicts within their time, their role and who they perceive themselves to be and evidence suggests that this continues throughout their study often leading to guilt and blame (Brine and Waller, 2004; Hewitt et al., 2010; Reay, 2002, 2003). This is where the narrative ‘beset by trials’ offered by Penketh and Goddard (2008: 322) elucidates how some women study ‘against the odds’ as subjective positions such as ethnicity, class and domestic responsibilities intersect with higher-level study. The same is true of the word *juggling* which, used frequently within literature, emerges as a powerful signifier reflecting the complexity of study with family and work life (Callender and Feldman, 2009: 18; Reay et al., 2010: 118; Yorke and Longden, 2010). *Juggling* describes this balancing of domestic responsibilities, feeling subsumed and never really being in control (Reay et al. 2009; Wainwright and Marandet, 2010). This discourse is seen within Beck’s (1992: 89) link of individualisation and risk as women are described as engaging in;

‘..juggling of diverging multiple ambitions among occupational necessities, educational constraints, parental duties and the monotony of housework’.

To show how these external factors influence women's study, Beck uses the term 'Trojan Horse' to show how entering HE allows other risks to enter women's lives (Beck, 1992: 53). These risks exist in trying to balance, juggle the complexity of life and not fail. For Baxter and Britton (2001) this risk is evident within the overtly gendered division of domestic labour and care, which is exacerbated further by class. They identify the asymmetric division of domestic duties in which only female students try to fulfil domestic *and* student roles whereas male students continued to rely on women, leaving women bearing the 'brunt' of domestic responsibilities (Wright, 2013: 207). Discourse therefore captures women with children within an omnipresent discourse of care and conflict (Oakley, 2005). For women who study there is a concern that this is a cycle of performative or symbolic reproduction (Edwards, 1993; Fraser, 2013: 21; Skeggs, 1997) as continuing to care perpetuates a dominant discourse of domestic care. In other words, trying to do everything increases the expectancy of reoccurrence and in plain terms, this hints at women being their own worst enemy. When intersected with ethnicity, for many Asian women the primacy of their domestic lives dominates their study (Bhopal, 2010, 2011) so much so that it takes over and creates study as a secondary consideration and something undertaken almost as a 'hobby'. Whilst it is easy to dismiss single women with no children, some have additional responsibilities that need to be embraced within intersections of ethnicity, age and class, which should make it impossible to apply a unifying lens to women's experiences.

Time

For women who study within the social intersectional of part-time participation and employment (additionally compounded by parenthood), time can exist as a restraint on their full engagement as women try to balance time to meet all possible demands (Colley, 2007; Foster, 2009; Yorke and Longden, 2010). In this way, time can be viewed as a mechanism of self-surveillance, since battles with time create an internal conflict for women who, as mothers, strive to create, project and even protect their claim to 'good mother' identities by making and creating time for their children and for study (Burke, 2002; Hodgkin 2010). For many, a problematic relationship with time may create altered patterns of study necessitating studying late in the evening or early in the morning. This potentially leads to disturbed sleep patterns and domestic life patterns (Maume et al. 2009; Yorke and Longden, 2010). This may ultimately lead women to experience a paucity of time for social or leisure activities, disconnecting them from other aspects of their life (Reay, 2003; Cree et al., 2009). Whilst it is clear that the lack of time can be a negative construct, there is evidence to suggest that it can be positive as this micro-management of time can make women feel creative and in control of time (Vaccaro and Lovell, 2010; Yorke and Longden (2010). This management of time is identified by Bowl (2001) as an important skill but as she states, the lack of time can also be a push factor forcing women to leave study.

Guilt as Self-Surveillance

Intersections of gender, study and parenthood for some women can create an internalised discourse that manifests itself as *guilt*. For some, *guilt* emerges when not enough time is spent with children. This in turn may make study feel

like a selfish act based on women's prioritisation of *their* study needs (Archer, 2006; Bowl, 2003; Leathwood and O'Connell 2003; Reay, 2003). Evidence suggests that women with additional caring responsibilities accept *guilt* as an expected and anticipated outcome of their participation. Yet, *guilt* is what often leads to withdrawal and the risk of failure (Reay et al., 2002; Colley, 2006; Wainwright and Marandet, 2010). Therefore, it is possible to conceive of *guilt* as a self-governing mechanism within women's relationships with study that exists when women with children feel they are not good mothers, wives or students. Stone (2008: 279) describes guilt as a response to 'role strain'. Whereas Penketh and Goddard, (2008: 321) refer to *guilt* as an outcome of navigating the 'Herculean task' of trying to study and balance domestic responsibility. For some women with children, a potential contradiction may emerge when not feeling good enough because of study, exists alongside the desire to be a better mother because of the study they undertake (Cree et al. 2009). Christie et al. (2008) present *guilt* as a cultural stress felt by women defined as minority ethnic, who experienced pressure not just from husbands and children but also from an extended family.

Similarly, Cree et al. (2009) expose the emotional battles experienced by women who try to balance children and study. They expose women as *always* feeling guilty which is compounded when women are defined as being a self-interested and 'selfish woman'. For Reay (2003: 3006) this is the outcome of policies that promote individualism in which women are left feeling 'guilt, anxieties and feelings of personal inadequacy'. It is possible for woman to hide behind a neo-liberal education agenda by using motives of enhanced employability to defend

their reasons to study. In this way, earning more means being able to provide more and potentially lead to being a better mother through the enhanced financial returns gained. When this happens a woman can be seen as demonstrating 'notions of altruism and selflessness' in a way that intrinsic self-orientated reasons may not. For Colley (2008), this form of motivation becomes a mask of legitimisation in wanting to create a 'respectable self' and warding off unwarranted criticism and claims of transgression. Similar to this is the term 'survivor guilt' used by Walkerdine (2003: 243) who describes this as a way women attempt to measure their success against the impact study has on their families.

There are also narratives in which women are presented as 'playing' at study and being selfish by wanting 'the best of both worlds' (Wright, 2013: 206). In this narrative, there is a sense of not being able to *win* that adds to the frustration many women experience. Forms of frustration are identified by Yorke and Longden (2010: 36) who found women used words like 'compromise', 'bogged down', 'forfeit' to articulate their study frustrations. Finally, *guilt* may occur when women feel unsuccessful or they have let themselves down (Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Reay, 2003). Thus, it is conceivable to consider *guilt* as an internalised, self-governing discourse that controls women's participation. In this role, it monitors women's relationships with the social world and their decision to study. *Guilt* through personal acceptance of failure may also be what confirms and compounds negative self-perceptions created out of difficult previous relationships to study.

Class

Class remains an important influence on women as students in HE (Archer et al. 2003; Burke, 2012; Connor et al., 2001; Leathwood and O'Connor, 2003; Reay, 2001, 2002, 2003; Reay et al., 2009; Skeggs, 1997, 2004). However, the intersection of class and gender intensifies within a complex negotiation of additional structural intersecting forces such as age and ethnicity, which influences women's identity whilst participating on a Foundation degree. Class issues are compounded by ethnicity and increased by parenthood (Reay, 2003) indicating these two structural intersections as pervasive influences on women's participation (Reay, 2003; Reay et al., 2002). This intersection can create discourses of alienation and marginalisation in which working class women are described as feeling like imposters, experiencing blame for dislocated pasts and educational failure. In this account, students are perceived as 'strangers in paradise' (Reay et al., 2009: 1104) reflecting an outsider position, which is similar to the themes emerging from Crozier (2011) and Crozier et al. (2008).

For Webb et al. (2006) limitations of choice are visible within the explicit link of gender, class, race and the studying of vocational qualifications. This may indicate a link between choice mechanisms and class that manifest as creating reduced 'horizons of action' leading to vocational learning (Ball et al., 2002; Gorard et al., 2006; Hodgkinson and Sparks, 1997). Webb et al. (2006) suggest that gaining vocational qualifications is still considered as vertically and horizontally occupationally gendered, classed and raced (Walby and Olsen, 2002 cited in Webb et al., 2006: 564). This for Reay et al. (2010: 120) is the social stratification of choice that leads to discursive regimes in which working class

students study in 'second class' institutions and in the context of this research, achieve potentially second class qualifications.

Class, therefore, is a powerful discursive formation and as a structural mechanism mediates and shapes women's experiences within HE (Alsop et al. 2008; Reay, 2002; Reay et al., 2010). For women, this may construct them within discourse based on difficulty, inauthentic participation and the development of fragile and marginalised learner identities (Archer, 2004; Brine and Waller, 2004). What emerges from literature is that exposure to struggle and difficulty within a class-infused discourse is associated with the development and use of resilience within higher education. In this account, under-privileged learners are seen as demonstrating 'remarkable' levels of resistance (Yosso, 2005, cited in Clegg, 2011: 95) and 'superhuman' levels of motivation, resilience and determination (Crozier and Reay, 2011; 1115).

Class therefore emerges as central to the discursive framing of students who inhabit identities located within a widening participation discourse. In this, widened access tries to encourage underrepresented groups such as young people from state schools, low participation neighbourhoods and the lowest socio-economic groups, as well as mature learners and disabled students into higher-level learning (HESA 2009). This creates a discourse in which identity categories are defined by previous family experience of HE, prior or current employment status and local home address (Smith, 2007). Additionally, structural intersections such as ethnicity, age, class and disability create a discursive boundary for non-traditional participation.

That class is a strong influence on students entering HE is a known discourse (Reay, 2003) and often considered within discourses of cultural capital (Reay, 2012; Stevenson and Clegg, 2011). Students who experienced education that was influenced by narrowed horizons of action and limiting opportunity structures are often seen as entering into HE with reduced capital accumulation. This translates as less power within the learning situation and a reduced ability to understand the language used (Stevenson and Clegg, 2011). However, for Clegg (2011) this specific alignment of less advantageous educational backgrounds and capital deficit creates a culture of blame in which students who may lack cultural capital are automatically considered as needing extra support and therefore deserving of different forms of learning (Haggis, 2009; Roberts, 2011; Woodley and Wilson, 2002). For Clegg (2011), this deficit thinking places the blame on students for their experience of educational disadvantage. Whilst for many non-traditional students support is required to compensate for past educational disadvantage, there is a tendency to conflate non-traditional students with a pathologised student identity based on narratives that present them as low ability, difficult, ill-prepared and deficit (Crozier et al., 2008). Students who do not possess a traditional HE profile are often labelled as risky students who have an increased potential to drop out (Reay et al., 2010).

It is interesting to note that middle-class students who engage in policies of non-traditional participation are still more able to escape this form of discourse as they find themselves with wider and increased choices (Hale, 2006; Reay, 2006). Crozier et al. (2008) explain this as within any educational context, middle-class students will achieve because they have increased capital accumulation and an

ability to operate within and understand the 'invisible pedagogy' within learning situations (Bernstein, 1996, cited in Crozier et al., 2008: 173). With an ability to decode academic and learning situations, middle class students accessing HE using vocational qualifications will do better because they know the rules of the game (Hodkinson et al., 2007) and in Foucauldian terms, this means they know and understand this discourse (Fejes and Nicoll, 2008).

Part-Time

Flexibility for part-time learning involves understanding the need to be able to work, study and fulfil other domestic and caring duties. Part of this balancing of risk exists in the making of decisions within possible options and *choices*. This may be in the mode of study or the time to return to study. Part-time is for some a minimising of risk, enabling the continuation of employment whilst studying and, as such, it is often presented as a pragmatic choice enabling the potential to have the 'best of both worlds' (Brooks, 2012; Maguire, 2013; Reay et al., 2002). Additionally, for lone parents or those with family ties and commitments, choice, convenience and perceived flexibility of attendance was all part of this pragmatic decision-making process (Callender et al., 2006). However, it is also symptomatic of reduced choices as Callender et al. (2006) suggest for many women there is just a choice of one; study part-time or not at all.

In terms of what this flexibility means for part-time learners, the report *Flexible Learning: Wrapping Higher Education around the Needs of Part-Time Students* (HEPI, 2013: 27) identified different and 'poorly understood' interpretations (Dunne et al., 2008; Webb et al., 2006). For Edmond et al. (2007: 179) one such

interpretation was that the onus of flexibility was not placed on the qualification but on the part-time student who had to be prepared for a changed relationship to study; one that involved working evenings, weekends, or at a distance. Part-time study can also bring different relationships to learning as Jamieson et al. (2009) and Woodley and Wilson (2002: 330) state, the part-time student is often the 'invisible student' who studies in the 'twilight zone'. This is not always negative for part-time students as this form of study can be more flexible and more accepting and adaptive to their needs (Jamieson et al., 2009). This illustrates one of the central arguments within the delivery of these qualifications to non-traditional students, that of institutional change and adaptation in meeting the needs of non-traditional students (Wilson et al., 2005; York Consulting 2004; Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Sheeran et al., 2007).

That part-time students experience difficulty and differences in the way they engage with HE is well researched (O'Donnell and Tobbell, 2009; Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Reay et al., 2002, 2003; Tierney and Slack, 2005) but for Brennan and Osborne (2008: 180-181) understanding the diverse needs of part-time students rests in acknowledging the inter-related factors that influence students' engagement. Therefore, there is an onus on institutions to respond to part-time students in terms of offering flexible and alternative ways to study (Bowl, 2001; Jamieson et al., 2009). There are two ways to view this; one way is to see this as *othering* in which part-time students are viewed as being different and are thus offered different forms of HE (Archer, 2007; Burke, 2012; Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003). The second way is to view alternative ways to study as proactive institutional responses to students' needs (Callender et al.,

2006; Edmond et al., 2007). As Foster (2009) states proactive accounts are needed for part-time learners who require institutional flexibility, exemplified by responsive changes to timetabling. However, it is debatable if this type of flexibility exists as Bowl (2001) reported that students survived in HE battling against a range of unhelpful structures, leading Roberts (2011) to note that one decade later HE, remains unprepared for levels of student difference. However, research indicates that it is possible to ameliorate differences part-time students experience by finding the right institution that meets their needs (Archer, 2003; Brennan and Osborne, 2008; Crozier et al., 2008; Tight, 2012; Winter and Dismore, 2010).

Age

The structural intersections of age, gender, class and ethnicity within returning to study is significant because for many women this highlights periods of increased personal and domestic responsibility and, as explored earlier, this can increase the potential of risk (Beck, 1992). Returning to study whilst occupying a range of competing roles and responsibilities increases the potential to failure through a process that Beck describes as a 'spiral of individualisation' (Beck, 1992: 89). Therefore, the beginning of risk occurs when the *choice* to study is made. This might be the *choice* of when to begin study, *choice* of where to study and *choice* of what to study (Ball et al., 2002; Hurst, 2013; Giddens, 1991; Reay et al., 2001). Furthermore, returning to study highlights the influence of delayed or enforced choice when decisions to discontinue study are influenced by narrowed horizons of action and limiting opportunity structures (school, family or the need to earn) (Peters, 2000).

Return to study narratives offer accounts of returning as a long-held desire (Brine and Waller, 2004) or as an epiphany discourse when a moment of self-realisation instigates participation (Brine and Waller, 2004: 101, citing Barone, 1995). This becomes a *right time* discourse with lifelong learning normalising delayed or unconventional times to revisit education (Billett, 2010; Fuller, 2007; Jongbloed, 2002). Therefore, decisions to continue education have the potential to be technologies of self, creating a possibility discourse of personal change and empowerment. What discourse reveals is that decisions to return are based on a raft of reasons such as work, family circumstances or a child reaching a certain age (Brine and Waller, 2004; Foster, 2009; Tierney and Slack, 2005). What is evident is that for women, adult life brings with it a range of transitions and these grow more complex as life patterns alter and become less certain (McNair, 2009).

Returning to study can exist within a simple binary of *choice* to participate or not (Reay, 2003), which further indicates the individualisation of study. A choice to participate is saying *yes* to the discursive rhetoric of enhanced employability, bettered social status and more money. Equally, not participating and saying *no* is agreeing to the possibility of being left behind and thus, seen as not wanting the best for your family or yourself (Burke, 2009; Tight, 1997). Individual accounts of wanting to be *better* and *more than* increase in potency when it is considered that Foundation degrees are targeted at low skilled and low paid public workers who may feel compelled to engage in this enhanced employability discourse (Edmond, 2004; Webb et al., 2006). However, McNair's (2009) report suggests a policy refocus that moves away from employability as the main goal

of learning, to one that recognises and accepts learning as having wider social and personal relevance. What may appear is that motives for participation for women may straddle neo-liberal employability discourse and those of personal empowerment. This is what McCune et al. (2010) identify as delineating the ebb and flow of women's HE engagement.

Risk

Risk is the fallout of weight or complexity of intersections experienced by women as students. For Walkerdine (2003) risk exists for women who experience study as dichotomies of experience; for these women there is success and failure, hope and despair. This may suggest an emotional or cognitive brittleness within neo-liberal modernity (Beck 1992) yet risk can also create 'a diversity of open possibilities' (Giddens, 1991: 73) in which the individual emerges stronger within a discourse of individual possibility (Beck 1992). Women can exist within this possibility, within a discourse of what Beck (1992: 89) defines as the 'new immediacy' as the individual rises to the challenge of enhanced employability and self-fulfilment. However, this new immediacy of possibility comes at a price, as both McRobbie (2004) and Webb et al. (2006) warn of increasing uncertainties experienced when women with additional complexities study.

For some this is an actual financial price as tuition fees are too high creating a barrier to study (Brine and Waller, 2004; Glogowska et al., 2007; Stone, 2008; Yorke and Longden, 2010). This is often compounded by hidden costs such as paying for books, parking fees and out of hours childcare (Bowl, 2001, 2003;

Leathwood, 2004; Machin and Vignoles, 2005) and for others the 'fear of failure' is too high a price to pay (Fenge, 2011: 384).

There is counter discourse to negative conceptions of risk as Pollard et al. (2008) and Fuller (2007) find mature students underwent a careful balancing of risk against the benefits of participation. In this weighing-up, students viewed aspects of self-development, increased employability and enhanced human, cultural and social capital accumulation against the acknowledged concerns of the risk of failure. What this indicates is that understanding and being prepared for risk may help women manage and minimise its effects (Ball et al., 2002; Burke et al., 2013; Fenge, 2011).

In addition, risk emerges in the decision to study using vocational qualifications to gain entrance into HE level study. Greenwood et al. (2008), Chipperfield (2012), Rowley (2005) and Winter and Dismore (2010) all identify entering onto Foundation degree programmes from vocational level 3 backgrounds as difficult. Students can experience significant differences in expectations of academic writing, which makes transition from level 3 to level 4 challenging. Whilst this may be considered as a *choice*, for some gaining vocational qualifications existed within their 'horizon of action' (Hodkinson et al., 1996) as decision-making for students who gain vocational qualifications is influenced by their environment, background, experience and the time in their life that these decisions are made (Heath, 2011; Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997; Hodkinson, 2008). Thus, decision-making is limited or enhanced by perceptions of *choice* available to students and influenced by the age at which this choice is made, which means for some

students, not all horizons are equal (Hodkinson, 2008). This influence of age means some access level 3 qualifications after post-compulsory schooling which creates gaps within learning (Tierney and Slack, 2005). Students who return to study after a long break may experience 'culture shock' as a reaction to forms of institutional, social, or academic difference (Crozier and Reay, 2011). Risk of withdrawal increases at times of transition when the difference is perceived to be too great and too difficult to negotiate, thus signifying the importance of supporting the academic and social dimension of early transitions (Moore et al., 2013).

Foundation degree participation emerges for women as a constant negotiation of risk encapsulating a range of *push* and *pull* factors of *choice* (Roberts, 2009; Pollard et al., 2008). These factors of stay/go or participate or not need to be viewed within the many significant transitions not just in women's lives, but generally within adult life. Learning through the life course becomes more complex as uncertainty is fuelled by job changes, relationship issues, changes in family structures and for some, wider and multigenerational families (McNair, 2009). In this way, Foundation degrees reflect the fallout of neo-liberal twin challenges of enhanced employability within a personal and globalisation context. As pressures continue to increase on the lives of individuals, so study becomes more complex.

Motivation to Study

It is against this background of problematic learning, access, value and return that motives for beginning study have relevance. Research suggests that

motives for beginning a Foundation degree are diverse, reflecting a range of intrinsic and extrinsic drivers (Bingham and O'Hara, 2007; Dunne et al., 2008). For some, motivation to begin the Foundation degree resides in the need to develop career opportunities (Dunne et al. 2008; Morris, 2010). As Yorke and Longden (2010) state, the main drivers for Foundation degree participation appear as the improvement of career prospects and a wish to enhance skills or employability within the same field. For others, an intrinsic and personally orientated discourse is offered that focuses on aspects of self-development and improvement (Greenwood et al. 2008; McCune et al. 2010; Robinson, 2012). This reflects a neo-liberal set of aspirations in which Foundation degrees are used to support women's upward mobility, as well as construct feminine identities as a neo-liberal project of reinvention and possibility (Walkerdine, 2003).

Individualistic and communitarian reasons appear in the work of Reay (2003) who explores the diverse motives women use that can be categorised as individualistic as they are self-interested motives, but there is also a clear and strong sense of communitarian reasons. For some women there is the desire to be an appropriate role model not just for their children, but also the wider community (Marks et al., 2003). Citing earlier work with Mirza, Reay (2003: 304) describes working-class women students as 'giving back' (Reay and Mirza, 1997), a phrase that encompasses a communitarian approach of children, their family and the wider community. What research makes evident is the strength of motives based on women studying for their children (Jamieson et al., 2009; Machin and Vignoles, 2004; McCune et al., 2010; Tierney and Slack, 2005;

Wainwright and Marandet, 2010). Specifically, this becomes considered as ethnically significant and a pivotal reason in Asian women's participation (Bhopal, 2010; Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003). For women, giving back to their children means they may be better at supporting their children's schoolwork and support educational progression. This has the additional outcome of extending the benefit of women's new-found cultural capital (Reay, 2003; Woodley and Wilson, 2002). However, amongst the individualist reasons is that returning to study may be an opportunity to escape 'the bondage of traditional gender relations' (Yuval-Davis, 2011: 186), to 'break out of domesticity' (Baxter and Britton, 2001:87) or may be an escape from an 'enclave' of care (Fraser, 2013: 31).

There is a wealth of discourse that connects the access Foundation degrees have to the full completion of a Bachelor degree as a reason for progression (Dismore et al., 2010; Dunne et al. 2008; Edmond, 2004; Greenwood et al., 2008; Jackson and Jamieson, 2009; Mason, 2010; Yorke and Longden, 2010). This claim may be supported by the limited academic recognition Foundation degrees receive and in the way they are considered as not affording the professional development, financial reward and career progression anticipated (Canter, 2006; Dunne et al., 2008; Penketh and Goddard, 2006).

Other motivations provide a counter discourse to claims of purely instrumental or utilitarian motives (Hoelscher, et al., 2008; Thomas, 2002) as an empowerment discourse emerges in claims of broadened horizons (McCune, 2010) and self-challenge (Wainwright and Marandet, 2010). Additional empowerment narratives

such as those that reflect the proving to self and others as *told you* accounts, indicate the desire of women as students to do something positive just for them (Jackson, 2003; McCune et al., 2010; O'Donnell and Tobbell, 2007) and make up for past wasted opportunities (Chipperfield, 2012). That participation seems to fulfil career and inner aspirations indicates the intersectional and overlapping narratives within women's participation in which purely instrumental, neo-liberal accounts of part-time study morph into the desire to transform, to find 'meaning' (Fuller, 2008) and hopefully experience enjoyment within this process (Reay, 2001b). As a platform for progression, it seems that the Foundation degree may allow students to prove to themselves that they can do it and cast off earlier educational failure (Fenge, 2011). What seems to be relevant is the relevance of personal motivational discourse as this begins to suggest a complex intersection of push and pull factors (Roberts, 2009) that exist in women's study.

3.4 Academic and Personal Transformation as an Outcome of Foundation Degree Participation

HE as a mechanism for personal transformation, empowerment and emancipation remains a forceful adult education narrative (Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Brookfield, 1986) and as central tenets of feminist belief (Code, 1991; Francis, 2010; Fraser, 2013). Biesta (2008b) in *Learning Lives* study describes the process of learning as a narrative that is not fixed but plays a part in defining self and Booth et al. (2009: 938) eloquently articulate transformation within HE, naming it a site where students can breathe and 'become richly human'. Therefore, transformation as an outcome of being on the Foundation degree

becomes a future self-narrative that, as Bingham and O'Hara (2007) suggests, creates new and different ways of being. This emerges from Baxter and Britton (2001: 87) who state that for mature students the process of being 'educated' is to 'stake a claim to a new identity', which can be empowering yet destabilising. Billet (2010) connects the destabilising identity process to Piagetian constructs of equilibration in which there is an attempt to reconcile past, present and future selves. As such, it is possible to conceive of women on Foundation degrees experiencing shifts in their personal perspectives of self, capable of perceiving differences in who they are and who they want to be (Tennant, 1998). This change is evident in the students interviewed by Winter and Dismore (2010) who conclude that autonomous learners could identify personal change. However, as Giddens (1991) states, the problem comes in maintaining this change, keeping it stable and ensuring there are secure reference points to enable this stability.

This stability emerges for Fenge (2011) and Brine and Waller (2004) as transformation within HE study, involving a re-construction of identity that shifts from fragile to strong and in so doing, increases students' meaning of their learning and of themselves. For some women personal and academic emancipation and transformation becomes something experienced as fraudulent and inauthentic (Reay, 1998). Reay (2002b) presents this fraudulence as a fear of being found out, which exists for women as working class students within not feeling good enough, or that HE study is not for people like them (Reay 2001b). The participants in Gordon et al. (2010: 175) use the term 'dunces' to describe not feeling able to meet the challenges of study. Similarly, Leathwood and O'Connell (2003: 608) suggest such feelings of inadequacy are 'deep rooted'

and 'long standing', recording one of their participants as describing herself as 'thick'.

For Reay (2003, 2004), Colley (2007) and Baxter and Britton (2001) this is the influence of Bourdieu's habitus which, briefly defined here, is a set of internalised dispositions, derived from upbringing and socialisation, that guide the thought processes or behaviour of individuals or groups (Bourdieu, 1986). Feeling fraudulent and inadequate suggests destabilised identities, which occurs when entering into HE. This may be because reference points for a past self-stability have changed (Giddens, 1991). Identity conflict, when viewed in this way, is similar to Foucauldian accounts of problematic identity development as Foucault states a person's present is explained by their past acting on and changing their present. In this way, it is possible to see students' self-limiting discourse of doubt created by a historical narrative or *genealogy* of self (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982). Like habitus, this past self-narrative is social-defined and created but unlike habitus, which is often used as a deterministic mechanism, as unconscious and un-reflexive (Adam, 2006), it creates possibility narratives in which change is possible (Macleod and Durrheim, 2002). For Foucault, change exists because of the dynamic interaction of power and self (Foucault, 1988).

This suggests that entering onto a Foundation degree and completing it can lead to a revised academic and self-concept. That Foundation degrees can make positive contributions to the removal of some of the barriers that previously prevented new or non-traditional students from experiencing the transformational opportunities of education, is acknowledged (Craig, 2009; Fenge, 2011;

O'Doherty, 2006; Robinson, 2012). This is matched by a consideration of the personal and professional empowerment and the development of academic skills and deepened subject knowledge they can offer (Dunne et al., 2009; Ooms et al, 2012; Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Robinson, 2012; Tierney and Slack, 2005). Additionally, there is evidence that being on the Foundation degree supports changes in students' perceptions of their academic ability and attitude to learning. In this discourse, it is possible to see students create themselves as capable autonomous learners (Fenge, 2011; Morgan, 2013) and able to make meaning of their learning (Merriam, 2001; Mezirow, 1997). Tierney and Slack (2005), Bingham and O'Hara (2007) and Simm et al. (2006), place the Foundation degree as a site of potential personal and academic change, making it possible to conceive of the Foundation degree as a mechanism for transformative learning. This is evident within Penketh and Goddard (2008) who link students' ability to progress clearly within Foundation degree completion. Furthermore, Bingham and O'Hara (2007: 318) found students who had completed a Foundation degree did not want 'spoon feeding' when they entered Bachelor level study, suggesting they consider themselves as academically transformed.

As the next section is an exploration of identities within transitional processes, it is worth considering Field and Morgan-Klein's (2010) view of 'studenthood' in which the identity of *student* exists as a temporary state of *being*; one which is liminal and described by the phrase 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1987, cited in Field and Morgan-Klein, 2010: 3). Thus, students exist within a temporality in which they are in constant states of *being* and *becoming*. Women as students in

this thesis have been Foundation degree students and have graduated by attending a graduation ceremony, which Field and Morgan-Klein (2010: 3) state acts as;

‘...temporal milestones are often associated with ceremonies and ritual, from the symbolic practices of assessment to the grand opera of graduation. All of these organise and reinforce the transitional nature of studenthood’.

Therefore, the women as students experience transitional student hood by *becoming* Bachelor level students. Within these transitions they experience a fluid state of identity construction within a process of ‘ever changing versions of self’ (Stapleton, 2001: 465) or as Biesta et al. (2008) term a narrative of learning created by the dynamic interaction of *being* and *becoming*.

3.5 Internal Transition to Bachelor Level Study

The interface of Foundation degree to Bachelor study is a relatively recent innovation within HE participation (Winter and Dismore, 2010). Using data from 2007-2008, numbers for this form of transition indicate about 59% of all Foundation degree full-time graduates in the UK and 42% of part-time students progressed to Honours degree programmes the following year (HEFCE 2010). As progression within existing qualification frameworks, this transition from Foundation to Honours level is described as needing to be coherent, smooth, clear and ladder like (QAA, 2010).

As explored in sections above, the diversity of Foundation degree delivery means that assumptions about how and where this transition takes place are

difficult to make. Unlike much research on Foundation degree to Bachelor level transition (Bingham and O'Hara, 2007; Morgan, 2013; Winter and Dismore, 2010) this thesis explores students' internal progression within one HEI, which means that the Foundation degree is taught as a HE qualification on the same HE campus as the Bachelor degree. Defined as 'dual sector', 'hybrid' or 'mixed economy' institution (Bathmaker et al., 2008: 126; Bathmaker and Thomas, 2009: 121), it embraces both FE and HE sectors often with students and courses that traverse the sector divide. Therefore, whereas many students experience progression as geographic and institutional change, leading to potential alterations in learning ethos and culture (Morgan, 2013), the students in this thesis experience an internal progression that, as Penketh and Goddard (2008) state, benefits students' transition as they know the institutional culture.

Similar to that described in Penketh and Goddard's (2008) study, the transitional experience of the students in this thesis is a vertical process (Ecclestone, 2009) leading to a 'boundary crossing' (Bathmaker et al., 2008: 10). This boundary crossing is considered a horizontal, personalised and complex process of adaptation, adjustment and transformation (Heinz, 2009; O'Donnell and Tobbell, 2007). Therefore, polarising this process as either difficult or easy is impossible, as Barron and D'Annunzio-Green (2009) state, it is so individualised and complex but equally, possible.

Students who experience internal progression should experience the benefit of insider knowledge as knowing the ethos of the institution and its academic, social and cultural characteristics should create a familiar and familiarising discursive

regime (Berglund, 2008). Academic characteristics that function as discursive regimes when filtered down into the classroom level can support student retention (Tinto, 2005) and students who feel they belong in the classroom and know these regimes are students who are most likely to stay (Tinto, 1997). Although there is evidence to suggest students experience smoother transition when this is provided as an internal process, this does not mean there will not be challenges. Penketh and Goddard (2008) found students experienced new demands on their study practices because of changes in academic thinking required when working at a higher academic level. Therefore, it is worth considering that any transition within HE can be a painful experience as it threatens identity stability by creating shifts and changes in students' frames of reference. This is more relevant for women as mature students, who may experience increased disorientation due to their additional and competing complexities within their study (Field, 2009; Fuller, 2007; Jackson, 2003) as changes in study for women with additional responsibilities means making changes at home.

3.5.1 Exploring Transition

One of the significant findings from Penketh and Goddard (2008) was the identification of a range of transition narratives that as aspirational, assessment, 'beset by trials', vocational and transition to physical learning elucidate students' experiences of transition. When these are seen in the context of additional narratives such as those based on geographic change (Knox, 2005), emotional change (Christie et al., 2008), academic change (Fenge, 2011) and the need for

transition to be supported (Leese, 2010), there is a need to consider transition under the headings *academic* (assessments/referencing), physical (environmental) and *emotional*.

Academic Transition

Discourse suggests that the transition from Foundation degree to Bachelor level study is one in which learning dislocations are created by the emphasis on vocational and technical skills rather than academic skills (Craig, 2009; Layer, 2004; O'Doherty, 2006). However, this skills gap is not considered as a long-term effect of transition as Bingham and O'Hara (2007: 316) state, students did not identify it as a 'critical gap', although some felt the work was initially 'above my head'. Penketh and Goddard (2008) found students felt Foundation degree completion had provided an academic model or template that gave them, as students, confidence to progress to Bachelor level study.

Table 2 below indicates Foundation degree expectations as a set of qualification descriptors taken from the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* (QAA, 2010) and this is presented alongside Bachelor level study (level 6) descriptors as identified within the *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications* (QAA, 2008).

Table 2: Comparison of Foundation Degree and Level 6 Qualification Frameworks

Foundation Degree Benchmarks (QAA, 2010)	Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (Level 6, Honours level) QAA (2008)
<p>Foundation Degrees should be able to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles in their field of study and the way in which those principles have developed • <i>successful application in the workplace of the range of knowledge and skills learnt throughout the programme</i> • ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied and the application of those principles in a <i>work context</i> • knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in their subject(s) and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in their field of study and apply these in a <i>work context</i> • an understanding of the limits of their knowledge and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge in their field of study and in a <i>work context</i>. 	<p>Bachelor's degrees with honours are awarded to students who have demonstrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline • an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline • conceptual understanding that enables the student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to devise and sustain arguments and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline ○ to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline. • an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge • the ability to manage their own learning and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).
<p>Typically, holders of Foundation Degrees would be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis in their field of study and in a <i>work context</i> 	<p>Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding and to initiate

- effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis, in a variety of forms, to specialist and non-specialist audiences and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively in their field of study and in a *work context*
- undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume responsibility within organisations
- and carry out projects
- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem
- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

And have:

- qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment and progression to other qualifications requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making
- the ability to utilise opportunities for lifelong learning

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

Source: Taken from Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark (QAA, 2010) and Framework for Higher Education Qualifications England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QAA, 2008).

It is clear to see that there are subtle differences between the academic demands of Bachelor level study and vocational outcomes of the Level 5 Foundation degree. The main difference resides in use of the phrase '*work context*' placed at the end of every descriptor (QAA, 2010: 13). This reiterates the Foundation degree's emphasis on the ability to link programme delivered knowledge to work-based practice, which is in contrast to the purely academic focus within the descriptors of Bachelor degrees (QAA, 2008).

At Bachelor level, the descriptors reveal increased emphasis on independent working ability, students' analytical capabilities and an engagement in wider, academic engagement.

'the ability to manage their own learning and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline.' (QAA, 2008: 19)

Whilst this may suggest a dislocating experience within students' learning, Bingham and O'Hara (2007) describe students as feeling able to meet the challenge of embedding practical skills within an increased theoretical context. Similarly, Foster (2009: 71) found that mature, part-time students assumed there would be an increase of difficulty 'as this is part of HE level learning' and Yorke and Longden (2010) present students as knowing it would be difficult but that it was possible to acclimatise. Evidence suggests students experience transition as a process of adaptation (Penketh and Goddard, 2008: 324; Bingham and O'Hara, 2007) or academic evolution. Leese (2010: 245) records students feeling that they 'didn't think I would adjust as quickly as I have' indicating that transition to higher-level study needs to be considered as a time-evolved meaning making process, which as Brookfield (1986) and Mezirow (1995) offer as a necessary feature of adult learning at any level.

This adaptation can be institutional in terms of meeting pedagogic and curricula change (Blaxter et al. 1996; Haggis, 2006; Jones and Thomas, 2005), or personal as the student has to change or be changed as they progress onto higher levels of study and transit to Bachelor level study (Bowl, 2001; Christie et al., 2008). Additionally, transition can create a heightened vulnerability for some

students. This could be for students with additional needs who may find the act of progression more challenging and destabilising (Peelo, 2002). It could also be for women who as mature, part-time students experience concerns due to the confluence of their complex lives with their study (Leathwood and Hey, 2009; O'Donnell and Tobbell, 2007; Reay, 2003; Reay et al., 2002). Although there can be a sense of heightened vulnerability, there are positive reflections on students' ability to negotiate and navigate this interface as Burke et al. (2013) and Bingham and O'Hara (2007) identify the focus on work-based practice as benefiting mature, part-time students as they bring their employment experience with them.

There are specific aspects of academic transition that appear revealing student concerns over the role and function of academic language (Bingham and O'Hara, 2007; Leese, 2010). This appears as language used in pedagogical and instructional contexts and seen within the communication of learning outcomes, embedded within assessment tasks and curriculum documents (Haggis, 2009; Burke et al., 2013). When students are not equipped with this language through a lack of previous exposure they experience what Skeggs (1997: 94) defines as an 'institutionalisation of capitals' that becomes an exclusionary practice. As students experience transition, not having the *right* knowledge is considered as reminding students of earlier educational failure, which can lead to students feeling coerced to withdraw or to accept responsibility for this deficit and fix it (Bowl, 2003; Haggis, 2006).

A counter discourse offers an alternative framing in which non-traditional students are transformed by their exposure to academic language and are able to create new academic versions of self. As such, knowing and being able to know appropriate language structures could become what Foucault considers as a technology of self, as it encourages self-belief and efficacy, creating an internalised discourse of personal achievement and empowerment (Baxter and Britton, 2001: 93). Whereas Bamber and Tett (2001) see poor academic language capability existing as a deficit and as difficult to mend, Baxter and Britton (2001) consider students' active gaining of appropriate level language structures as encouraging assertive learning behaviour. This assertive learning behaviour increases students' confidence as they use this new academic vocabulary as 'embodied cultural capital' (Baxter and Britton, 2001: 89; Haggis, 2006).

One significant concern within research on this transitional interface is the role of referencing as an academic skill (Morgan, 2013; Simm et al., 2006). Entering onto Bachelor level study seemingly increases the emphasis on this protocol (Winter and Dismore, 2010), which acts as a form of transmission of the academic codes of participation for being on a degree (Haggis, 2006). Referencing therefore becomes a discourse within a very context specific regime of knowing and being able to master it appears as a legitimisation of attendance.

Academic support is part of the required progressional process as identified by the Foundation degree benchmarks (QAA, 2010: 9) that states progression from Foundation degrees may require a bridging programme to ensure that learners

progressing onto the next programme are 'adequately prepared'. There is some uncertainty as to what *adequately prepared* means. Being *adequately prepared* for transition is enshrined in policy discourse (QAA, 2014). The host institution offers this support as a *bridging* experience that functions as a standalone afternoon of workshops and lectures designed to inform progressing students about increased academic expectations. This does not reflect current research that suggests support for transitional phases should be gradual, preferably lasting over the first few weeks or 'honeymoon period' in order for students to come to terms with new learning experiences (Barron D'Annunzio-Green, 2009: 18). Although there is no specific form of content, transitional support structures should also be meaningful, purposeful and relevant, informing students of differences in levels and study (Barron and D'Annunzio-Green, 2009; Dixon et al., 2005; Knox, 2005; O'Donnell and Tobbell, 2007).

As an institutional response to student support and success, transitional programmes should reflect *institutional commitment, expectations and support* identified by Tinto and Pusser (2006) as three of the five conditions for persistence and success in learning. They identify *institutional commitment* as institutions working to increase student success by investing in resources. When these resources are linked to *support*, these should be academic, social and financial and connected closely to a students' learning environment to be effective. The final aspect is having clear and high institutional learning *expectations*. These should be communicated informally and formally and ensure there are no differences in expectations between groups of students, as Tinto and Pusser (2006) indicate that students quickly pick up expectations.

Expectations are linked to this discursive framing of *students* and *support* as Leathwood and Hey (2009: 435) consider 'support' is often located as opposite to 'challenge' and 'hard-critical thinking', which in a transitional context has resonance as it potentially subjectifies the transitioning student as one that is dependent, fragile and vulnerable. This transitioning student is *fragile* as they do not know the demands of higher-level study and thus may struggle to achieve (Winter and Dismore, 2010). Whilst the Bachelor level descriptors (Table 2) identify normative degree level student construction as one who can 'manage their own learning' as an abstract self-regulating process (QAA, 2008: 19) Foundation degree descriptors always return students to a vocational work context thus signifying reduced learner autonomy. Again, it is essential not to present a generic account of students, as Barron and D'Annunzio-Green (2009) state, autonomous working may be alien for *some* students, but it may not be alien to *all* students.

Physical Transition

Even though the students in this study experience internal progression, preconceived expectations of a smooth and trouble-free transition may not consider the challenges students face (Penketh and Goddard, 2008). Part of the challenge is in the difference in learning contexts and as stated previously, students who study on Foundation degrees may have experienced smaller class sizes and have benefitted from a collaborative approach to learning. This has to remain a generalised statement as learning environments are diverse (Reay et al., 2010) but it does indicate the possibility of a physical change as a challenge within transition. One aspect of physical change within transitional research is

the alteration or amalgamation of groups, which, in Morgan's (2013) account, created feelings of imposed difference. Therefore, changes to students' learning spaces are more than just environmental differences as these can alter group cohesion and identity. Mature students, when transplanted to new learning contexts with younger and different groups of learners, may experience this alteration of identity (Foster, 2009).

When viewed in this way learning spaces are institutional discursive regimes that form formal and informal learning structures. These indicate how students are perceived and feel they are perceived within an institution. Bernstein (1996) presents this as an *invisible pedagogy* as students are able to de-code what this means to them. For Bourdieu and Passeron (2000: 47) this 'implicit pedagogy' acts as a form of cultural reproduction, transmitting the codes of what it is to be in the institutional context. When considered in this way, classrooms, lecture rooms and all institutional spaces are normalising and within a Foucauldian account, they operate as government mechanisms regulating and controlling the participation in these spaces. They are institutional discursive regimes that set out the parameters for students' learning.

As part of the discursive regimes of institutions, it is worth identifying the role of lecturers and the significance they have in this transitional discourse (Bingham and O'Hara, 2007; Bowl, 2003). Barron and D'Annunzio-Green (2009) identify lecturers ameliorating some of the tensions and issues experienced within transition. Similarly, a link seems to exist between concepts of students' resilience with lecturers and other staff support (Stone, 2008) in which strong

feelings of friendship and kindness act as affective bonds (Tierney and Slack, 2005; Thomas, 2011; Yorke and Longden, 2010). These bonds appeared to have a positive impact on students' motivation to study, becoming an unexpected collateral benefit from studying (Leese, 2010).

Emotional Transition

Emotional transition exists within student adjustment and acclimatisation and can be seen because of the other two forms of transition. Emotional transition therefore exists within research that explores student attitudes and dispositions to transition and learning (Barron and D'Annunzio-Green, 2009). Transition has been described as difficult regardless of the progression route experienced and it can be 'an intensely emotional process' leading to mixed feelings (Christie 2009: 125). For Reay (2008: 403) there is an emotional component within dichotomies of 'anticipation' and 'ambiguity' but always experienced alongside feelings of risk and cost in the renegotiation of a new transformed learning identity. Similarly and although from a dual sector progressional experience, older students were found to experience progression as 'horrendous', 'stressful' and a 'rollercoaster of confidence and emotions' (Cree et al., 2009: 896). Whilst this may reflect the more disruptive dislocation of FE to HE dual sector progression, it may also be the experiences of *all* students as they experience the highs and lows of transitional encounters.

Assessment processes can be a source of academic shock as at Bachelor level there is an increased focus on criticality and wider reading (Bingham and O'Hara, 2007; Greenbank 2007; Morgan, 2013; Penketh and Goddard, 2008).

Assessments can be longer, of a higher standard with an increased requirement for independent learning and, as Penketh and Goddard (2008) state, an overemphasis on written assessments seen at variance with the more vocationally orientated underpinning of the Foundation degree. Linked to this academic shock is the need for feedback to confirm students are working at Honours level. Tinto and Pusser (2006) describe feedback as one of the five conditions for student success, as students are more likely to succeed in settings that provide students with frequent feedback about their performance and Foucault (1978) sees feedback as integral within the seriated power created by assessment loops.

A counter discourse does exist as Bingham and O'Hara (2007: 317) announced students 'coped well with the variety of assessment' and developed a range of appropriate self-management strategies. In addition, students who draw on a high academic self-concept can reduce the effects of culture shock and ameliorate some of the tensions within transition (Penketh and Goddard, 2008). Once this high academic self-regard is attained, it may help to maintain a viable identity and one that endures during the process of transfer from one learning situation to another (Ecclestone, 2007). For some, successful completion of their Foundation degree could be the origin of this high self-concept.

3.6 Women, Resistance and Power

This chapter began with a consideration of the difficulties women face within study and it ends with a consideration of coping mechanisms that enable women

to participate in HE. As explored in the chapter above, life experiences and life points become important within a consideration of age, gender and lifelong learning (Archer, 2004; Edmond et al., 2007; Webb et al., 2006). This means that there are certain times when study is complicated by pressure points in life which lead to additional stress and difficulty. These are epochal or episodic as they happen at specific times in a woman's life. Examples of this could be having children, losing parents, a marriage break up and work concerns. Participating on higher-level study during certain epochs adds to the pressure and risk experienced (Biesta, 2008a; Pollard et al., 2008; Yorke and Longden, 2010). Therefore, positive dispositions and attitudes to learning emerge as essential components of women's learning.

Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000) use the term *disposition* to identify attitudes influential on an individual's education. The word used frequently within the collocation of women and HE is the word *resilient* (Sheard, 2009; Maddi 2004), which Maddi (2004), Sheard and Golby (2007), Harvey et al. (2006) and Beasley et al. (2003) consider as a core personality trait, disposition or attitude to learning. In this discourse, resilience as a pivotal disposition becomes the essential personality trait and is often presented alongside concepts of 'hardiness' (Sheard, 2009: 190) to indicate the emotional strength shown by women who exist within complex learning situations. Resilience, according to Maddi et al. (2002: 72), is a response to stressful situations and turning them into 'growth-inducing' rather than 'debilitating experiences'. For Sheard (2009), Sheard and Golby (2007) and Beasley et al. (2003) resilience is supported by the 3 Cs of hardiness; *control*, *commitment* and *challenge*. This discourse is found in

Harvey et al.'s (2006) conclusion when a link between student retention and resilience is identified and this is further echoed in Gorard et al.'s (2006) concepts of female hardiness as women overcome difficulties when engaging in higher level study.

As a core coping mechanism, resilience is linked to academic buoyancy as it is a way of resisting difficulties within study (Glogowska et al., 2007; Martin and Marsh, 2009; Sheard, 2009) and bouncing back. Walker et al. (2006) define it as the ability to recover from and endure hardship and for Reay et al. (2009) resilience is the successful management of risk that facilitates adaptations to setbacks, challenges and pressures experienced. It becomes a manifestation of strong learning dispositions, namely perseverance and fortitude which, when placed within a specific classed discourse, helps working class students 'capture success' (Crozier et al., 2011: 145). Furthermore, women are perceived as 'resourceful', determined, persevering and strongly focused' (David, 2009:11) and for Sheard (2009: 190), women as mature learners are 'resilient' and 'hardy' because of their ability to weather life's adversity and remain buoyant, possibly because they have had to learn to do this. Therefore, it is possible to see resilience as an ideal disposition to acquire as it enables students to experience the dips and bumps of their participation and perhaps more significantly, their transition (Penketh and Goddard, 2008). In terms of the role of resilience within identity construction then, Deakin-Crick and Yu (2008: 391) expose this as 'the opposite pole of dependence and fragility is 'resilience'. Within a Foucauldian perspective, resilience is resistance to power and is the ability to continue to study against power-induced pressures (Foucault, 1980). Overcoming these

difficulties leads to potential liberation and therefore, resilience can emerge as a technology of self.

For women in HE, compromise is either a pragmatic coping mechanism or evidence of defeat (Foster, 2009; Yorke and Longden, 2010). Wright (2013) explores women engaging in compromise as trying to achieve the best of both worlds. This means they have to experience a trade-off such as in choice of institution in which localism emerges as the determiner of choice due to intersections of gender, class, race and other gender parallel sub-fields (Reay, 2002; Walby et al., 2012). It may also be a response to the self-governing mechanism of *guilt* as women attempt to balance work, domestic chores, children, relationships and study (Baxter and Britton, 2002; Brooks, 2012; Mason, 2010; Morris, 2010; Wainwright and Marandet, 2010). That this compromise is usually manifested within their attainment can be found within research that sees assessments and deadlines juggled with other demands (Bowl, 2001, 2003; Christie et al., 2008; Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Tierney and Slack, 2005). According to Walsh (2006: 559), the outcome of this battle is 'satisficing' when being good enough is all that can be offered.

There is an individual aspect to coping and for some, coping manifests itself as an emotional detachedness that enables them to deal with life's realities (Bowl, 2001: 158, citing Weil, 1986; Colley, 2006). It can also be something that is projected and false that hides the reality of failure for women. Reay (2003) describes this as women saying they are coping when they are not. This for McQueen et al. (2009), is an internalised and performative discourse that

evolves into a form of self-persuasion. Whether it is performative or not, for Brennan and Osborne (2008) flexibility has to be a valuable core coping attribute as it allows students to juggle issues and concerns and maintain their participation.

There are additional external coping mechanisms such as peer, family and community networks seen as pivotal in sustaining participation (Burke et al., 2013; Foster, 2009; Thomas, 2002). For Winter and Dismore (2010) women find peers with a sense of shared background in an environment where they feel accepted. This emerges in Bhopal's (2010 and 2011: 525) account as particularly relevant for minority-ethnic women who seek friendships as a support network and relationships based on ethnic sameness and identity. Here women seek out friends who are like them in order to create a strong, close study community. This sense of community emerges as significant for all women as Thomas (2002) found women wanted to be in communities of learning that offered a reciprocal and supporting network based on a shared personal and institutional identity. Therefore, in a Foucauldian account learners have the ability to develop skills, aptitudes and dispositions that enable them to embrace change, difficulty and challenge and use it for personal transformation (Olsson and Petersson, 2008) but it needs to be within a specific discursive field.

3.7 Chapter Summary

The first section of this chapter explored the design of Foundation degrees and considered their design and function within a neo-liberal context. A consideration

of women on Foundation degrees explored the experiences of women, which emphasised the influence of structural intersections of gender, age, class, ethnicity. Internal progression was explored under the heading as academic, physical and emotional transition and it ended with a consideration of coping mechanisms that enabled women to resist potential difficulty utilised within study.

The following chapter outlines the methodology and methods used in this research. It considers pertinent issues such as, research design, sample selection, method design and delivery and ethics within the research.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the methodology, outlining the approach taken for the research design and provides an overview of the methods used. Arguments are made for the choice of case study as a design, based on its commensurability with an exploration of the fluidity of power and discourse within a Foucauldian framing. The theoretical overview in Chapter 2 outlined Foucauldian approaches and introduced the two constructs of power within *governmentality* and two tools for an exploration of power. These tools help to understand and make sense of data. *Resistance* explores how experiences can lead to the transformation of academic or personal identities increasing feelings of confidence enabling the process of transition. *Surveillance* is used to explore the role of discourse on the women's ability to create academic and personal identities.

4.2 Case Study as the Research Design

As stated above, the role of power through discourse was considered in depth in Chapter 2 and this highlighted the functioning of power through the social, cultural, political and personal use of discourse that is used formally and informally to control the lives and identities of individuals (Foucault, 1982). Foucault's construct of *governmentality* offers a critical lens to view the existence of power as fluid and diverse, controlling or regulating women within a range of interacting forces and structures. This power is relational and context-specific (Powers, 2007) and its social situatedness permeates all aspects of women's

lives, influencing the macro and micro realities of women's existence (Foucault, 1980). This aspect of socially situated power leads me to interpret the world as socially constructed (Stanley and Wise, 1983; Harding, 1991) and, as a woman I see the world constructed through discourse, surveillance and regulation (Skeggs, 1997). This is why case study is used in this study as it is responsive to the research context, allowing me to explore the fluidity of power within different contexts and at different levels of meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Robson, 2002) but within one specific context. In addition, I adopted case study as the research design because in its most basic form it is a study of a single social unit or case (Stake, 1995) and as such, it can be explored in depth and over time (Creswell, 1998) and significantly, within a natural setting and context (Hakim, 1987). Meyer (2001) states that case study provides a structure for 'how' questions and this becomes pertinent as the focus of this study is the function of power through discourse within women's experience of higher-level learning on the Foundation degree. It also seeks to know how and if women experience transformation, personal liberation and empowerment (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Reinhartz, 1992; Sarantakos, 2004).

The flexibility offered by case study within which to apply a theoretical framework is important as my understanding of power relies on Foucault's construct of *governmentality*. This application of theory provides a critical lens that stops this approach to the research becoming what Hartley (1994, cited in Meyer, 2001: 331) warns, as a 'description without meaning'. Therefore, case study provides a strong yet flexible research design as I need to understand the macro and micro-

realities of power on the experiences of women and, as this is from different viewpoints, I need to do this using a mix of complementary methods.

4.2.1 Case Construction

The case studied is defined by a set of specific criteria and these are based on gender, mode of study, intersecting social classifications and internal progression from Foundation degree to Bachelor degree within a specialist vocational HEI. This set of boundaries creates a very specific case within which to explore the role of discursive power within the identity construction of women who move between Foundation degree and Bachelor level study. Chapter 1 identified the approach taken to this exploration as multi-layered in which the sample of 30 is refined to provide a focused 'heart of the case' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 26). This 'heart' is comprised of five women who are presented as offering narratives that would facilitate an exploration of the relational, fluid, individual and individualising actions of discursive power. Guided by Miles and Huberman (1994: 27) on case construction, I offer these following four considerations:

Conceptual Nature of the Case

This reflects the case boundaries, which provide the parameters for the research (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 1995, Tesch, 1990; Yin, 2003). The criteria for these boundaries are defined as women, who have a range of additional roles and responsibilities and thereby exist within intersections of age, gender, class and ethnicity. They are part-time learners who have completed their Foundation

degree and are internally progressing onto Bachelor-level study within a vocationally orientated specialist HEI. It was important to locate the boundaries of the case in such a specific way, as this case was one of women within same institution progression and transition.

Sample

The sample formed the boundaries of the case (Hakim, 1987; Stake, 2003) and the full cohort of 33 women as progressing students was used, but as three of the women were direct entrants who had undertaken their study elsewhere, they were eliminated from the study leaving a sample of 30 women.

Table 3 below illustrates that all the women studied part-time and all but two participants worked full-time. There was a range of intersecting subjectivities including ethnicity. Participants recorded their ethnicity as Asian British: Indian/ Pakistani/ Bangladeshi and White British. Of the 14 women who declared themselves as Asian British, nine were Bangladeshi heritage and five were Pakistani. However, due to the small sample size, there was an amalgamation of ethnic grouping creating the two ethnic categories shown below. The creation of the homogenised ethnic analytic category is undertaken with caution and mindful of Modood and Shiner's (1994) concern that simplistic binary classifications do not explain the diversity of minority ethnic experience. Subjective positions were identified using a list generated by the researcher, but the participants who wanted to identify themselves in a different way added the terms *young adult* and *daughter*.

Table 3: Questionnaire Sample

Age	18-20		21-30		31- 40		41-50
Ethnicity	1 White	6 Asian British	5 White British	8 Asian British	7 White British	3 White British	
Domestic Role	1 young adult	2 daughters 2 single 1 wife 1 mother	3 partners 1 mother	1 partner 7 mothers	2 single 1 partner 5 mothers	3 mothers	
Full-time/ Part-time	full-time	6 full-time	5 full-time	1 part-time 7 full-time	1 part-time 6 full-time	3 full- time	

Heart of the Case: Case Interviews: The five women who self-nominated their participation and formed the heart of the case are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Image-based Case Interviews

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Employment	Domestic Identifier
Kate	20	White British	Full-time Teaching Assistant	Young Adult
Sue	30	White British	Full-time Teaching Assistant	Mother
Shabana	33	Asian British Bangladeshi	Full-time Teaching Assistant	Mother
Ayesha	35	Asian British Pakistani	Full-time Teaching Assistant	Mother
Parveen	32	Asian British Pakistani	Full-time Teaching Assistant	Mother

The women selected to form the 'heart of the case' were chosen because they offered experiences that were broadly consistent with the women found in the whole cohort. Whilst these experiences are individual, they could offer insights that applied to other women; however, these 5 women do not represent the full range of social intersections found within the larger sample. This is discussed further in Chapter 9.

Physical Location

This is a consideration of the location of the case and as discussed in Chapter 1, the host institution is a specialist and vocationally orientated HEI. The location was selected as it provided a location to explore the process of progression and transition without the need for institutional change.

Temporal Context

Time is an important element of a longitudinal research design (Sheridan et al., 2011) and this importance is recognised in ensuring that the timing of the points of data capture are appropriate (as shown in Table 5) but also as something that influenced participants' narratives and narration within the case interviews. This is considered significant as much of this research relies on recall, which requires an awareness of time reflecting on the past, present and future (Mitchell et al. 2011). The case study was designed to capture data at critical points in the progression and transition process. Table 5 shows the research occurring over a thirteen-month period.

Table 5: Timescale for the Research

Methods	March 2012	April 2012	May 2012	Oct/Nov 2012	April 2013
Questionnaire	33 responses				
Image Interview s	Image-based case Interviews				
Mediation Interview s	Mediated interviews (on the BA for 6/7 months)				
Focus Groups	Focus Group 1 (end of the Fd beginning of the BA)				
	Focus Group 2 (on the BA for one year)				

4.3 Methods Overview

The methods selected for use within the case are designed to uphold principles of respect, autonomy and empowerment inherent in feminist research (Burns and Walker, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Harding, 1987; Stanley and Wise, 1993). Additionally, the methods selected reflect a feminist concern to use every means possible to find out about the lives of women (Galman, 2009; Macleod and Durrheim, 2002; Yeatman, 1994; Watts, 2006). Therefore, the methods selected offer the potential to view multiple sites of power and with the capability to explore the interconnection of the ‘micro and macro-strategies’ of power in discourse (Macleod and Durrheim, 2002: 44) that as the biopower on everyday lives could be exposed in the narratives told (Foucault, 1991).

A mixed approach to data collection in which questionnaires, individual image-based case interviews, mediation interviews and two focus groups, one at the beginning and end of the transitional process, was used to ensure a good understanding of the phenomenon studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2008). The strong focus on narrative data collection meant the capturing of the rich and diverse stories that needed to be considered in different perspectives and at different levels of meaning.

This mixed set of methods is considered as crystallisation (Ellingson, 2009) which is an approach to data collection that adds multi-dimensionality and offers a deepened and complex understanding. For Ellingson (2009), using methods in this way is like weaving together layered and complementary accounts. Whilst it can be argued that this approach to data collection may indicate issues with data cohesion and integration, Lambert and Loiselle (2008) dispute such issues arguing this approach to data collection is an alternative to triangulation, adding a level of rigour to the research. Tracy (2010: 837) also describes this crystallised approach in which there are multiple sets of data as creating a 'criteria for qualitative goodness'. In terms of data integration and analysis, Lambert and Loiselle (2008) argue that mixed forms of data collection are confirmation of the phenomena as the data obtained by one method are anticipated to corroborate those acquired with the other, providing two levels of understanding with one set of data supporting the other.

A piloting process was undertaken prior to the research launch in March 2012. This was done to ensure that all the methods were feasible and would capture

the range of data needed to explore this problem (Robson, 2002; Silverman, 2013; Yin, 1994). To see if the sequence in which they were delivered could effectively tell the participant's stories, the same three women from the previous year's cohort offered their valuable time to pilot all three methods used. This took place in October 2011 and the following amendments were made:

Questionnaire: Following feedback from three participants, I reduced the number of questions and tried to make the design more appealing for participants to complete within limited time.

Image-based Case Interviews: Following feedback from the piloting process, the following issues were addressed for the final version:

- the instructions for the task were made easier to follow
- increased awareness of the function of the image in the research
- changed the wording so as not to suggest a specific way of completing the task
- Increased the range of drawing/painting resources (such as watercolour paper and paints)

Feedback elicited from the participants indicated that issues with drawing competence did not concern them once they began their narratives and that the images created provided a prompt for their narration.

Focus group: The same three participants helped to pilot this method and this explored collective accounts of being on the Foundation degree and being on Bachelor-level study. I also received feedback on whether participants felt the methods were too intrusive on their study time and if there was a preferred time

to undertake the interviews. All the participants indicated that the sessions should be after formal lectures so as not to interrupt the participants' study time.

Use of Video

It is important to state before a discussion of the methods that two cameras were used in all the interviews and focus groups (Figure 5). Whilst both provided audio recording, one camera focused on participants' image selection and gestures whereas the other camera was positioned to provide a view of the research context. Permission was requested from all participants and although complex, if one had declined to be filmed their wishes would have been respected and other forms of data capture would have been used (voice recording or note taking for example). As all students agreed, these cameras provided audio and visual data and monitored the research procedure providing a testament to the operationalisation of the research (Jowett and O'Toole, 2006).

Figure 5: Camera Deployment



4.3.1 Questionnaire Design and Delivery

As discussed previously, a small-scale questionnaire was administered to 33 women who as part-time students were progressing from a Foundation degree onto Bachelor level study (three were later eliminated from the study as previously explained). The questionnaire was designed to collect a range of demographic information, but also to collect attitudinal data relating to the experiences of women as part-time students on the Foundation degree and their subsequent transition. A mix of questions such as 5-point Likert scale questions and attitudinal response rating was used to collect data (Robson, 2002; Thomas, 2009). Acting on feedback gained from the pilot process to aid speedy and full completion, a booklet was created and the questions were kept to the minimum. A snap-shot view of the questionnaire is provided within the text to provide a meaningful reference point but a full-size version is available in appendix 2.

In designing the questionnaire, care was given to ensure that the participants understood the context of the study. Part of this is an appropriate ethical response to research but this had more relevance in this context as I was an insider researcher. To support the participants' understanding of the research, a small paragraph about the research was included to provide an overview of the research focus and intent (Barrios et al., 2011; Robson, 2002). There was also a section designed to inform participants of their rights within participation. It took about 15 minutes to complete and the students returned these to the member of staff who acted on my behalf to address any issues of coercion and power imbalance (Robson, 2002).

Figure 6: Questionnaire Pages 2 and 3

Section 1: These questions provide me with background information.

1. Please circle the age you were when you began your Foundation degree.

18-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+

2. Pick underline the category that best describes your ethnicity.

White White British; White Irish; Other White Background
Black Black British Caribbean; Black or Black British African; Other Black Background
Asian Asian or Asian British Indian; Asian or Asian British Pakistani; Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi; Chinese; Other Asian Background
Dual Heritage Dual White and Black Caribbean; Dual White and Black African; Dual White and Asian; Other Dual Heritage Background.
Other Ethnic Background: Please indicate
Unclassified Includes: Not Known; Information Refused

3. What qualifications did you already have on entry onto your Foundation degree? Please state your level 3 qualifications (A levels, NVQ, BTEC etc)

Teaching Assistant	Nursery Worker/Assistant
Learning Support Assistant	Cover Supervisor
Nursery Manager	

4. Other (please state) _____

Is this: Paid/salaried Unpaid/voluntary

2

5. Please circle one word that best describes your home role/responsibilities.

mother wife carer partner

Other (please state) _____

6. Please circle if you achieved a Foundation Degree? YES NO

Was this achieved at this institution? Please circle YES NO

Section 2: These questions allow me to explore your reasons for enrolling onto the BA (Hons) ECS 'top up' degree.

7. Firstly, I need to know why you began your Foundation degree. Please tick the statement/s that best describe your reason/s for beginning your Foundation degree?

In terms of work, it was to comply with current government policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
To gain advancement or promotion in my current job	<input type="checkbox"/>
To gain higher paid employment	<input type="checkbox"/>
To develop myself as a professional	<input type="checkbox"/>
To achieve it for my family/children	<input type="checkbox"/>
To help me change my job or career	<input type="checkbox"/>
It was a 'second chance' opportunity to continue my education	<input type="checkbox"/>
To prove I could achieve a higher-level qualification	<input type="checkbox"/>
To achieve it just for me	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you wish, please add a comment in the box below to further explain your choices above

3

Figure 6 shows questions designed to collect demographic data to confirm the boundaries of the case. Age, ethnicity, level of qualification and employment are considered as is a section asking students to identify main home roles and

domestic identifiers. Section 2 begins by asking about motives for Foundation degree study.

Figure 7: Questionnaire Pages 4 and 5

8. Please rate the possible endings to these statements which could explain your reasons to progress; I am progressing onto the BA (Hons) ECS

1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neutral, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree

	number
.... so I can achieve my dreams of gaining a degree	
.... because I want to continue to study	
.... because I do not feel my Foundation degree is adequately recognised as a qualification	
.... to prove to myself I can achieve a degree	
.... to prove to others I can achieve a degree	
.... because I feel I have to	
.... to achieve a degree to change my current employment/profession	
.... because I like studying at this institution	
.... because I want to achieve a higher qualification after this	
.... because I trust my lecturers	
.... because if I don't, I will feel a failure	
.... because I want to change my life	
.... because my employer expects me to	
.... because I want to develop myself as a professional	

Please add your own reason or expand on any of the above.

4

Section 3: This section is all about your perceptions of progression and transition.

In this research, progression is defined as a movement that occurs when you have achieved one qualification and, as a result of this, have the opportunity to enrol on to a higher level qualification. Transition is an individual and personal process as you adapt to your new level of study.

9. In terms of your ability to achieve, how did you feel when you started your Foundation degree? Place X on the number scale provided.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unsured of your ability to achieve						Very confident in your ability to achieve

10. Please rate the following statements.

1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neutral, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree

I feel my Foundation degree provided me with the knowledge, skills and understanding I need to enter onto the BA (Hons) 'top-up' degree	
I feel empowered to progress because I have achieved my Foundation degree	
My Foundation degree has given me confidence in my ability to study on the BA (Hons) 'top-up' degree	
I do not feel I will be successful due to my Foundation degree	
I need more support after completing my Foundation degree	
I know how to study effectively as a result of completing my Foundation degree	
My Foundation degree has made me feel that I need additional study skills to be successful	
My Foundation degree has made me feel that I am not prepared for this level of study	

5

Figure 7 above, shows that participants were asked to rate a set of statements that may explain their motives for wanting to enter Bachelor level study. What it also shows is that each section contains a variety of types of questions designed to prompt deep thinking so the responses are more than just a tick box response.

Figure 8 below illustrates question 11 as a rating scale for the transition support sessions and question 12 is complementary to question 9 asking students to rate their belief in achievement before the Foundation degree and after.

Figure 8: Questionnaire Pages 6 and 7

11. Did you attend any progression or 'bridging' sessions? (Please circle)

yes unsure no

If yes, Please indicate how useful the following sessions were in supporting your understanding of working on the BA ECS (Hons).

1= very useful—5 = not very useful

	1	2	3	4	5
Academic writing					
Dissertation Support					
Individual Tutorials					

12. How do you feel about your ability to achieve now that you have completed your Foundation degree and are starting your 'top up' BA (Hons)?

Please X on the number scale provided.

	1	2	3	4	5
Unsure of your ability to achieve					
Very confident in your ability to achieve.					

6

13. Please circle 3 words that accurately describe you at this point in your study.

knowledgeable	successful	strong
focused	confident	worried
confused	happy	resilient
able	empowered	failure
weak	learner	student
fragile	scared	secure

The list above may not contain all the words you need. Please add your own word/s here if you need to.

Thank you very much for your time and help.

HELP

I need your help to continue my research and ask you to write your name below if you would be prepared to help me further. This may be useful to you as you will experience the research process first hand and witness the use of different methods used.

To help you make your decision, please see the accompanying information sheet, which describes the research project in full, the level of commitment necessary and my responsibility to you as a participant in my research.

7

Question 13 requires students to select or supply three words that act as self-descriptors. This process was designed to provide a snapshot of students' sense of academic identity as they enter on to Bachelor level study. This becomes a way of tracking whether this set of identity words change as the participants

continue to transition. These words were selected from a range of literature on feelings and attitudes of women in HE (Appendix 3 provides a full source list of these words). Examples of these words are '*successful*' from Crozier et al. (2008), '*worried*' from Reay (2003) and '*secure*' offered by Mercer (2007). As these words had an important role in establishing conceptions of post-Foundation degree learning identities, this selection process was continued throughout the study with the five women who participated in the case interviews. They were asked at three points of data capture to review and amend their word choices. They could add new words if required and these are reviewed in Chapter 6 within a consideration of stable conceptions of self within the transition process.

The final section of the questionnaire was the self-nomination form identified by the word 'HELP'. By writing their name on the line provided students could indicate their willingness to participate further in the research.

Questionnaire Analysis

The question responses were analysed considering Foucault's construct of *governmentality* and the two tools defined as technologies of power production as outlined in Chapter 2. This required consideration of how each question would relate to the form and function of power. Table 6 shows how each question had a specific part to play in collecting and understanding the data. It was analysed within the discursive framing of *resistance* as creating a *technology of self* and *surveillance* that created *technology of power*.

Table 6: Questionnaire Analysis

Design and Intent

Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5*

The first five questions provide a range of demographic information.

Questions 7, 8

These questions identify the drives and motives to begin study.

Question 11

This has subparts that explore the support sessions offered by the institution.

Questions 9, 10, 12, 13

These questions provide attitudinal responses to being on the Foundation degree and progressing onto Bachelor level study.

** Question 6 was a confirmation question to see if all the students had attained a Foundation degree and all were progressing internally.*

As this was not a large data set, the data recording was in a large Excel spreadsheet. This was analysed by counting the frequency of responses and beginning to see relationships across data. In this way, data was reduced making the comparison of responses manageable to study (Winter and Dismore, 2010). Tables, charts and diagrams were generated that facilitated a narrative account of the data. This narrative account was described, tagged with a shorter descriptive label and coded using *resistance* and *surveillance* to indicate the function of discursive power (Table 8). The findings are displayed using the tags identified within the analysis, with data described using the terms *technology of*

power or self to consider if power moved as productive or repressive in the women's participation.

4.3.2 Case Interviews: Image-Based Interviews

A brief glossary of terms is provided here in the interests of clarity and consistency of usage within this study. Whilst terms such as questionnaire and focus group tend to have fairly consistent meanings, the term *image-based* and *graphic elicitation* are less well known and can have different meanings (Buckingham, 2009). In this research, the following terms are used:

- **image-based method** – a method of narrative collection that uses an image as a prompt (Buckingham, 2009; Sheridan et al. 2011)
- **graphic elicitation** – using a drawn image to collect 'elicit' narratives (Bagnoli, 2009; Wiles et al., 2008)
- **case interview** - participant discusses their image and describes it in the session
- **participant-generated** - created by the participant (Drew et al., 2010; Prosser and Loxley, 2007)
- **mediating case interview** – a form of member-checking that allows the participants to see the discourse created by the researcher and to review, amend or challenge. It is used to extend an understanding of the transition process.
- **visual methods** – using photographs, expressive media images, video and maps (Bragg, 2011; Buckingham, 2009; Cremin et al., 2011; Kearney and Hyle, 2004)

Images as tools for graphic elicitation are used despite the dearth of information on how to use and analyse them and therefore, because of this, I have explored this method in more depth in an attempt to make the processes used clear and transparent. I aim to show how meaning was consistently made across the large amount of image and narrative data and how there was an attempt to keep me as the researcher visible. Although as methods of data collection they were complex, they were also enjoyable to use because I had to adopt an unfamiliar gaze and challenge myself to look at the experiences of these women from an unusual research method perspective. I argue that as a method, the use of images offers an innovative and powerful means of providing useful, relevant and meaningful data.

The usefulness of this data resides in the richness of the narratives collected when set against minimal researcher intervention and control (Kearney and Hyle, 2004; Mannay, 2010; Sheridan et al., 2011). This method provides what Foucault (1972: 122, 123) describes as a 'historical analysis' in which the created narratives offer a 'uniqueness that gives them existence'. In other words, they create a concrete and personal record or 'testimony' of the participant's experiences (Berger, 1972: 2). Furthermore, when used to elicit narratives, images are a 'catalyst for unstructured interviews' (Kearney and Hyle, 2004: 362) and act as 'evocative artefacts' (Wagner 2001: 7). Evident in Chapter 6, is the way they prompt recall of feelings and experiences (Berger, 1972). Therefore, images as methods allow participants to show individualised and unique accounts of their experience, which enhance the emotional acoustic of the study (Sligo and Tilley, 2011; Butler-Kisber, 2008).

One of the benefits of this approach to data collection is the ability of images to increase the fluency and intensity of the participants' recall (Cappello, 2005; Kearney and Hyle, 2004). This increased intensity is what Sheridan et al. (2011) describe as the conjoined nature of images, narratives and time, becoming a human way of knowing, reducing the scale of the research and making it more personal to all involved (Banks, 2001; Thomas, 2009). This scale is seen not just within the images themselves, which are unique depictions of learning experiences, but also in the increased participant talk-time, suggesting that images are a participant-centric approach in which the research process is more collaborative and participatory (Banks, 2001; Pink, 2006; Prosser, 1998).

In terms of procedure, it was relatively simple to distribute and, as Mitchell et al. (2011) state, the primary benefit of image-based research is in its simplicity, as participants need a pen and a piece of paper to begin the process. To support the participants' ability to do this research, they were given a pack of materials (Figure 9) and a set of instructions (Table 7) that were designed to reassure them and define the procedure for image collection and the interview.

There were **four** clearly defined steps in this method;

STEP 1

Participants were asked to provide an image that explained, defined or articulated their experiences of being on their Foundation degree and their first transitional experiences of being on the Bachelor degree (these are provided in Chapter 6). Table 7 shows the instructions given to the participants within

individually distributed sealed A4 envelopes three weeks before the case interviews. These were provided in the plastic folder packs given to the participants as shown in the photograph (Figure 9).

Table 7: Instructions for Image-Based Task

Instructions
<p>Activity:</p> <p>Please create an image that explores your experiences of being on your Foundation degree</p> <p>How will you do this?</p> <p>This is not a test of artistic skills. There is no right or wrong way.</p> <p>Here are a few suggestions for how you could approach this task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You could present a timeline indicating a few critical events or experiences. • You could present a journey or a map showing how you arrived at the end of your Foundation degree. • It may be a single image, which expresses how you felt at a specific time. • It could be a range of images exploring a variety of feelings and experiences. <p><i>Please do not include any features that could identify you, your colleagues, or the university you attend.</i></p> <p>What happens next?</p> <p>Please take three weeks to complete this activity, keep your work safe in the envelope provided and bring it to the next arranged interview.</p> <p>In this next meeting, we will discuss what you have created. I will need to have the session videoed so I can analyse the information as fully as possible, but you can refuse to do this if it makes you feel uncomfortable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>You can keep your images if you wish but I will need to make a copy.</i>

Included in the plastic wallet with the instructions was a set of coloured pencil crayons, a tin of paints with a paintbrush, two pencils, a selection of felt pens, a rubber, a sharpener, four sheets of white A4 paper and two sheets of watercolour paper. When the task was completed, participants were able to keep these resources after they had finished.

Figure 9: Image Research Pack



STEP 2

For the image interview, participants brought their images to an interview room where, as discussed previously, two video cameras were installed (Figure 5). To begin the session, participants were encouraged by the open-ended prompt *'would you like to tell me about your image'* following which they began to describe their image either pointing or pausing at relevant and critical points. I prompted where I felt necessary but the focus of this session was on the participants giving their account. However, there were some topics essential to the research identified by the questionnaire findings which needed to be

discussed and whilst these may not have been presented formally as questions, they were important talking points. These were:

- Their experiences of the Foundation degree – personal and academic
- Their feelings as they entered the Bachelor degree – how they felt about themselves personally and academically
- Their first experiences of being on the Bachelor degree

This use of images exemplifies the benefits of graphic elicitation as a prompt within unstructured interviews (Prosser, 1998; Prosser and Loxley, 2008; Sheridan et al., 2011) and the 'free-fall', 'free-answer' or 'unrestricted' questions offered participants time to compose a reflective response (Vinten, 1995: 27). It is clear in the transcribed narratives that in this part of the interview process, participants' words occupy more narrative space than mine (appendix 4a). My role was to listen and respond to the stories as they unfolded. It needs stating that as a form of interviewing it required substantial self-bracketing and self-control not to jump in and make the participants say what I needed or wanted them to say (Mannay 2010; Mitchell et al., 2011).

Although the images were used by participants to tell their histories within the interview context (Berger, 1972), Step 3 describes how they also became part of a multi-modal analysis (Norris, 2002; Banks, 2001; Miller and Bell, 2005). This meant that the narrative offered the parts of the image selected for discussion, the stills taken from the video capturing this selection or other important movement, were essential in understanding the stories told and making sense of these in the framework provided. Thus, it became an intertextual account (Allen, 2000; Matoesian and Coldren, 2002) as it used all forms of text as discourse and

knowledge (Foucault, 1978, 1994). This becomes more apparent in the next step.



STEP 3

This step was undertaken away from the participants and involved the first part of the analytical process. This was the first data analysis draft, as it had to be ready to show the participants in the mediation interview that followed so they could amend any of my comments or understandings of their experience. This first analysis involved a careful transcription of the narratives, video and image (appendix 4a). The transcription began by focusing on the narrative, which was followed by a transcription of the video that emerged through a set of time-coded screen shots recording pertinent actions and gestures that was clearly linked to the narrative offered. This meant capturing participants on the video footage, highlighting specific parts of the image as they interacted and described what they had produced. As participants did this, parts of the image were clearly identified and, as the image was uploaded onto a computer, it was possible to isolate part of the image and insert this alongside the other forms of discourse within a predesigned table. These 'discursive manifestations' reflected the interdiscursive and extra linguistic features of the phenomenon (Wodak, 2011: 628).

This interdiscursivity meant the transcribed text video stills and images could be read left to right in a linear format (Figure 10). What emerged was a complex intertextual account of their experiences that when all linked together, increased

the acoustic of the data collected. A draft set of emerging themes was presented in the final column to discuss with the participants in the mediation interview. Each part of the process is explored in detail below.

Figure 10: Image-Based Interview Analysis

Transcript:	Video Audio Analysis	Image analysis	Emerging themes
<p>Would you like to talk to me about your image please</p> <p>First of all I started off with a happy face &gt; well when I first started the course after about a 15 year break of study coming back into uni @m... </p>	<p>00:00:15 Points to first happy face (this emerges as significant in this narrative)</p> 	 <p>...as visual metaphor for her confidence when she started.</p> <p>Why is Yellow is chosen colour Are the eyes wide for a reason?</p>	<p>FdA was first step to Confidence – at start and at parts of journey</p>

Transcribed narrative and she is referring to the image and a specific part of it

Ayesha identifies part of the image on which she is reflecting

This is the part of the image being discussed by Ayesha (see left)
 I reflect on her comments and the image selected and make statements to ask her in the mediation interview.

A description is applied
 It is not coded yet.

Transcribing the Narrative

Transcribing the data was a form of data immersion, which involved listening, watching, internalising and recording the participants' words more than once (Bragg, 2011). This increased proximity to the data in turn increased my familiarity and encouraged a systematic analytical approach in which themes emerged and could be linked to the headings used in this thesis (Hammersley, 2010). As the video camera captured both visual and audio data, this necessitated several sweeps of the data to ensure all aspects were explored. Although challenging and laborious, this process of multiple listening and viewing

established a feel for the participants' *voice* and behaviour and whilst there are no claims that this was a strict transcription, it endeavoured to be an accurate verbatim description (Hammersley, 2010) that used researcher created codification (Witcher, 2010). Where possible, there was a naturalistic recording of their words as pauses, coughs and hesitations were recorded (Mazzei, 2007).

Video Analysis

Videoing encourages researchers to consider all forms of behaviour as data and thus part of the research discourse (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). Therefore, watching the video involved noting and time-stamping pertinent aspects of participants' communication and included noting facial, hand and larger physical movements and gestures (Bull, 1990). In this way, the captured movement added to the meaning of the highlighted parts of the image (Silverman, 2001). For this to happen two video cameras were used, not just as a failsafe mechanism, but for capturing varying viewpoints so that gestures, expressions and movements were captured from two angles to increase accuracy and visibility within the interview.

Image Analysis

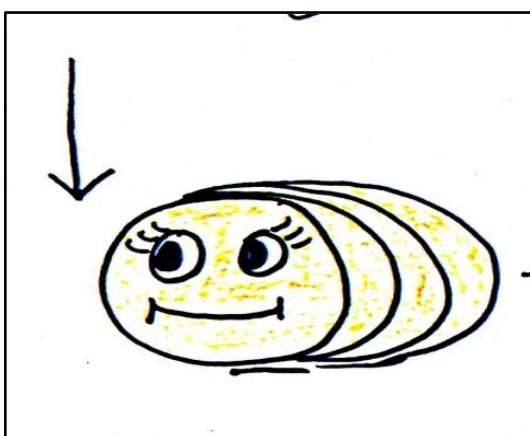
The images the participants created had two purposes; to elicit increased participant reflections and responses and to enhance my understanding of their experience. The images were treated as a form of discourse that used different cultural and personal codes and forms of symbolism (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001). Therefore, understanding the image

involved levels of meaning (Barthes, 1972) that in this research are defined as *denotative* and *connotative*.

Denotative

A denotative meaning was possible when participants associated a symbol or image with a literal meaning. This meant there was some constancy in the application of this meaning as it was recognisable, obvious and easily interpreted by both the participant and the researcher (Chandler, 2002; van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001; Weber, 2008). This is evident in clouds, thunderbolts, books and other such images that when used had clear and stable meanings as denotative metaphors. These codes are considered as universal and there is some transferability in their interpretation since these formed a common visual vocabulary.

Connotative



Connotative images are more interpretive and thus problematic which is where the mediation interview became significant as the meanings of these images were more implied (Banks, 2001; Weber, 2008). This suggests that this type of image has a

more fluid meaning that relies on more than is actually present and may be specific to the participant and context. An example of this can be found when Ayesha draws her face on top of three circles (image above). I read this as her

portraying an image of multiple selves as layered one on top of the other but for Ayesha, this image represents her friends on the course '*backing her up*'. When a variance like this occurred, the participant's meaning took precedence. Therefore, it is here where the term *polysemy* has significant relevance (Prosser, 1998) as a sign may have multiple messages becoming nuanced, subtle and open to challenge and interpretation (Spencer, 2011).

Therefore, the complexity of this process resides in the roles adopted. As an interactive participant, as viewer and interpreter of the image, I apply an understanding of the symbols used and try to make sense of what emerges (Chandler, 2002). However, knowing if I had interpreted their image according to the participant's original intentions meant there had to be one more step that would add accuracy, authenticity and depth to the narratives collected. Therefore, a mediation process was created that enabled my understanding of the image to be shared with the participants (Buckingham, 2009; Pink, 2006; Prosser, 1998).

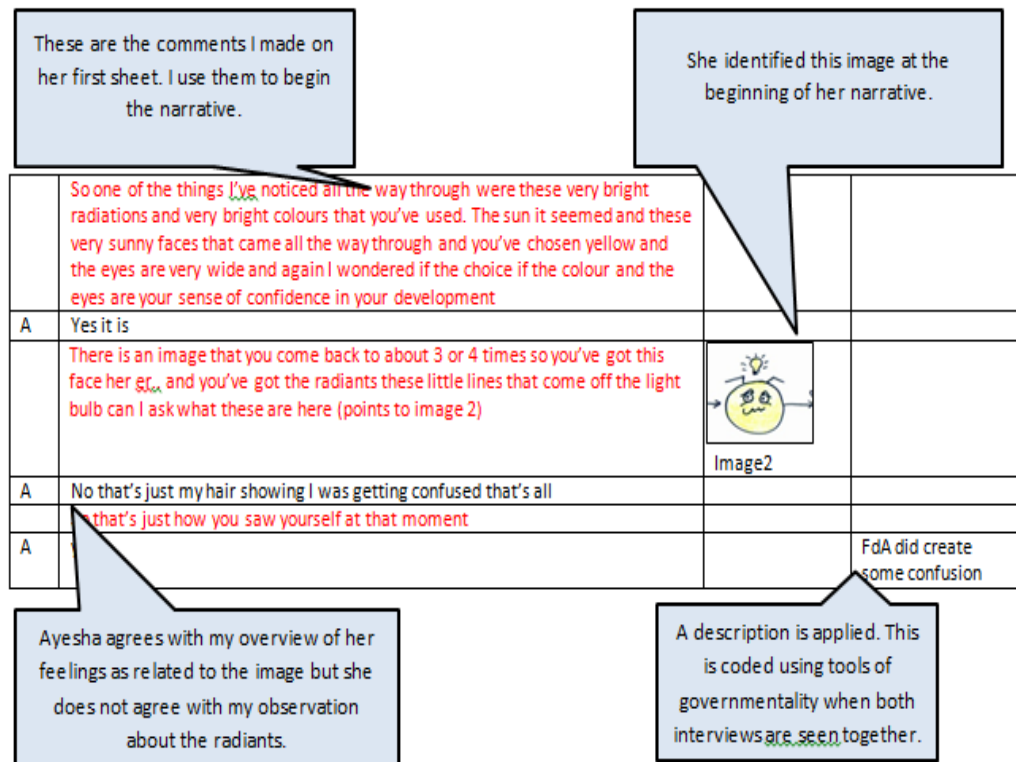
STEP 4

The table created after the first interview (Figure 10) was shown to the participants who were invited to agree, challenge, or amend what was written (Please see appendix 4a for an example of tabular approach). This aspect was a form of member-checking but also an extension of the stories they told as information elicited from this process increased the depth of data collected because it covered a new period in their progression. This interdiscursive

process also increased the participatory aspect where the researched were more active in the research process (Pink, 2006; Rose, 2001; White et al. 2010). This is evident in the post-image mediation interview, which also led to an increased conceptualisation of their experiences as they historically and socially situated their narratives. For some, this meant creating multiple perspectives of one event (Drew et al. 2010). This ability to review and reflect on the created narratives was an important feature of the research and this part of the study offered the women the ability to reflect on an experience. In this study, the influence of time on memory, recall and perception is significant and the mediation process emerges as a critically reflexive process for both me as the researcher and for the women in the study (Weber, 2008). Offered as a valuable process of participant enlightenment and insight, this process of self-reflection can be linked to Foucault's (1994) *technique for self* as it forms the basis of a self-determined development. In terms of adult learning, the ability to reflect on the self and change reflects Field's (2000) view of permanent learning as a transformative self-actualisation (Mezirow, 1997).

As shown in Figure 11, a new table was generated following the discussion of the image in the case interview (Figure 10). Called a 'mediation interview', it allowed students to reflect on the analysis of their first image and to challenge any points I had made. The screen shot in Figure 11 shows Ayesha's challenge to the relevance I had placed on the happy face image. This interview was transcribed and analysed and when completed, the two interviews could be linked together and seen as a continuous story (Please see appendix 4b for an example of this).

Figure 11: Mediation Interview

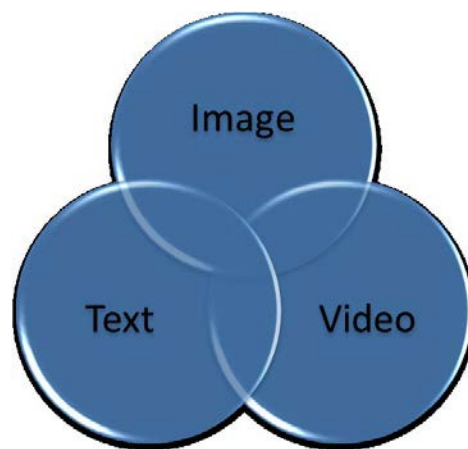


This member-checking process was not just emancipatory in ensuring that the participants had a voice in the research, but also participatory as it offered a research perspective based on 'with and by' rather than 'on' (White et al., 2010: 143). Argued here is this member-checking solicited the views of the participants in terms of the 'credibility of the findings and interpretations' (Creswell, 1998: 202), increasing authenticity and accountability in a process that created multiple truths and perspectives. Additionally, the use of multiple arbiters helped the researcher to remain faithful to the stories and narratives collected.

Intertextual Reading of Data

In order to make sense of the range of data offered, an intertextual reading of data was adopted in which narrative text, video stills and images (Figure 12) were presented within a tabular format that could be read left to right (Figure 10). This intertextual approach linked all narratives together creating an overlaying of one on top of the other in trying to understand what is meant, what is shown and what went before (Allen, 2000; Kristeva, 1969). This connected the images used and the transcribed text and these worked together to add meaning (Gibbs, 2007) creating a relatedness to each other (Chandler, 2002).

Figure 12: Intertextual Readings of Data



Once all the tables were created for the case and mediation interviews, a process of analysis was undertaken using an intertextual account of reading the data as a whole. It involved describing a segment of action, tagging it with a shortened theory-defined label and categorising this within constructs of power. Table 8 shows this in more detail and this process remained constant for the questionnaire and focus group, providing consistency within the analytic process.

4.3.3 Focus Groups

Two focus groups were used to generate a collective approach to the experiences of being on the Foundation degree and transitioning on to Bachelor level study. They were context-dependent group interactions (Hollander 2004) and produced collective accounts that were more than group interviews and more like 'shared frames of meaning' (Warr, 2005: 204). Selected because of the social context offered (Hollander, 2004; Warr, 2005) both focus groups offered different perspectives of the same progression and transition process. There was a concern that there would be a contrived artificiality of the points for discussion within the group, but this did not happen and naturalistic talk was produced (Basit, 2003; Jowett and O'Toole, 2006)

For both focus group sessions, all students were given a selection of dates and times by email. These were mutually agreed and confirmed at least one week in advance. Held in a familiar room, drinks and biscuits were offered as all participants had been at work, engaged in a full afternoon of studying and this was an additional session at the end of their day. In consideration of their lives outside of their study, there were some issues with members having to leave early. In the first focus group, one participant was informed of a childcare issue meaning that the group discussion ended prematurely. The first focus group lasted for 35 minutes and the second lasted 45 minutes. This was far shorter than expected but the quality of the discussion mattered more than the quantity.

Focus Group Analysis

Without wishing to repeat information since the analytical process is explored in more detail below, the approach taken involved placing each focus group narrative within a tabular format. Although a time-consuming process, this way of data immersion involved checking and rechecking of the coding process, ensuring consistency with all sets of data. Using Foucault's (1980, 1994) theoretical framework of *governmentality* descriptors, tags were applied to identify occurrences of *resistance* and *surveillance* within the narrative offered.

4.4 Making Sense of the Data

For all methods used, the process of applying meaning was essentially the same. This involved reducing the data into manageable parts, usually placing this into a tabulated format. Table 8 indicates that all data were coded in a process of meaningful reduction using the tools identified to explore the form and function of power. This application of theory to data was an iterative process ensuring all examples were commensurate with the theory applied (Glaser, 1965; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; O'Leary, 2004). This process meant describing and reducing each segment of data to a summarising tag and considering it as aspects of *resistance* or *surveillance*. This was further linked to the tools *technology of self* and *technology of power* to show an understanding of power through discourse for women as part-time students on a Foundation degree and transitioning onto Bachelor level study. Again, as an iterative process this meant being immersed fully in the data.

Table 8: The Analytical Process

** These are examples*

Theoretical Framing	Tags	Applied Descriptors*
Technologies of Power Surveillance	Subjectifying discourse	Competing subject positions – mother/Student
	Discursive policy regimes	Access Policy - Routes into HE
	Issues within Neo liberal discourse	Guilt for their study Enhanced employment
Technologies of Self Resistance	Resistance to dominant discourse	Resilience to difficulty
	Future self-discourse	Intrinsic motivation to progress
	Empowerment	Transformed academically

Using the same process for each method ensured consistency in understanding the data. This meant there was an iterative checking, re-reading of the data and, specifically, in constantly comparing previous incidents in the same category (Glaser, 1965). This process of comparison was part of this data immersion (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Schreier, 2012). In practice, this looked like tables of information that as data sheets were written on and over, colour coded, revised and revisited as the process unfolded over time.

To draw the three sets of data together a rhizomatic approach was used (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). This meant revisiting the findings from each

section and writing down the identified tags creating a large map of data, which showed the relationships between and within the findings. What this approach offered was a means of illustrating the multiplicity of the information gathered and showed Foucault's conception of the organisation of power as something that is capillaried and multiple, existing in layers and levels. This was reduced further to present the discussion of the findings under the heading of *governmentality* and showing how women as students exist within HE through the lens of the *dual technologies of power and the self*.

4.5 Ethical Research

Chapter 1 provided an overview of my understanding of ethical research and more specifically, the asymmetric power that exists within the relationship I had with the participants. It signposted the need for strong reflexivity and this section develops and strengthens this understanding of and the relationship with power within this study.

4.5.1 Positionality and Reflexivity

Chapter 1 discussed my relationship to the participants in this study and explored how this could lead to accusations of research coercion and minimise the credibility of the research. This section and the ones that follow explore this further attempting to show how I addressed this relationship within the research. Indeed, I offer that reflexivity is a constant feature within my research, acting as a critical self-evaluation and bracketing evident in the careful and effective

research and research management demonstrated (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). I approached the research in this way, not just to increase the awareness of knowledge distortion (Taylor, 2011) but also to apply self-bracketing to maintain an objective focus on the emerging data. As explored in Chapter 2, as a feminist adopting Foucault's tools of domination and self, ethics is the relationship you ought to have with yourself (Foucault, 1984; McNay, 1992). This means enacting an intense ethical reflexivity that questions the role of the researcher and sees this as power-laden within this research, which is itself a site of discourse creation (Cooper and Blair, 2002). Reflexivity when used in this way is a critical self-conduct (Foucault, 1980, 2000) or governance and my governance of self is visible within the ethical and moral imperative shown ensuring relationships with the researched and the emerging data are not destabilised (Gibbs, 2007; Trowler, 2011).

There is a more specific consideration, which resides in my claim to be a feminist researcher who, in adopting a non-exploitative approach, tries to create 'mutuality' (Watts, 2006: 387) in the research relationship; one of co-construction with the choice of methods allowing the participants' voice to be heard and not smothered' (Fine et al., 2000; Oakley, 2005). This attempt to create a co-constructing relationship with the data exists in the mediation interview process that attempted to provide a space for participants to challenge my understanding of their experiences and to amplify their voice within the research. It was gratifying to experience participants check my assumptions with their data and directly challenge claims I had made. Examples of this attempt to create

increased participant visibility in the research to counter my perceived power can be found on page 128 and in Appendix 4b.

The research methods used seek to respect the participants by protecting them from harm and are not exploitative or manipulative. They also offer research integrity and reflect openness within/without the research (Watts, 2006). The methods selected offer respect as a foundational concept and this respect manifests itself in hearing the stories told and trying to ensure I *hear* them well (Letherby 2003; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Walby, 2000). Part of this is in my usage of methods designed to make the 'familiar strange' (Mannay, 2010; Trowler, 2011) and increase participant ownership. However, I am still mindful of Sampson et al.'s (2008) exploration of the emotional risk perceived within feminist research and the boundaries between the research and the researched that *need* to be in place. These boundaries then become part of the discourse between power and knowledge both as part of the research and part of the analysis (Reinharz, 1992). In other words, not acknowledging or applying boundaries creates a distortion in the underlying premise and promise of feminist research in its quest to empower women and foreground their voices.

The tabular approach used to display the analysis of data in Chapter 6 is a means of ensuring credibility by showing the image, the narrative and the video shot as instrumental in the meaning made. This way of presenting data was designed to provide a fresh and new gaze and as identified by Mauthner and Doucet (2003), this approach facilitates the development of a heightened

reflexive analysis by presenting interconnecting and interrelated relationships between the data.

Whilst perceived as problematic, there are benefits to this position since I have access to the participants and to the data needed to understand them and the institution in which I work. My 'cultural neutrality' (Trowler, 2011: 2) is therefore exchanged for cultural literacy. This becomes a benefit and not a detriment, as knowledge of the institution's processes and procedures increased levels of insight and understanding (Watts, 2006). Therefore, I offer that researcher reflexivity, when used as a researcher government mechanism, is a strong acknowledgment of the power held within an intersection of author, text and, ultimately, the world outside of the research (Greenbank, 2003; Macbeth, 2001).

4.5.2 Ethics in Practice

Whereas reflexivity focused on the research as data, the term 'ethics in practice' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 264) suggests a practical and procedural approach in addressing ethical concerns. As a researcher in this study, I have tried to adopt an 'ethics of care model' (Watts, 2006: 385). This model calls for increased awareness of issues with power. This is particularly relevant as I knowing the participants and my position in their academic lives creates an asymmetric power dynamic that could be termed exploitative with participants feeling obliged to participate (Stanley and Wise, 1990). I could not and did not assume I had guaranteed access to the women as participants (Sampson et al., 2008). Therefore, ethics of care approaches are visible in my research in the use of

anonymised questionnaires and using a colleague to administer the questionnaire away from me as the researcher. This was an attempt to resolve issues surrounding obligation and compulsion to comply. Similarly, procedural ethics considered the needs of the case interviewees who were known to each other and clearly identifiable within the focus groups. Attempts to minimise breaches of ethics existed in information shared by email and research communication not conducted in public. All images used within the research were anonymised, obscuring faces and no identifying information was shared where possible.

Other ethical considerations in practice are evident in ensuring all students were informed of the research process in terms of its purpose and, significantly, their role within it. At all stages of the research, consent was gained to address issues of power (BERA, 2011; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2005). It was essential that all the participants knew about the research in its fullest sense and their ability to withdraw should this be necessary. To ensure a full disclosure, they were informed of my supervisory process and my use of their material in any resultant publishing or conference dissemination. This became an important feature of the work as it used their images and their words, making their lives and experiences explicit with the potential to make them feel exposed (Banks, 2001).

There was a genuine attempt to ensure that there were high levels of participant and researcher confidentiality in all the interviews and focus groups provided (Robson, 2002). This was important as focus groups are social arenas and participants may have exposed *secrets* and as such, the 'sanctity and

sovereignty of the individual' needed to be considered as paramount (Baez, 2002: 44). Therefore, the legacy of engagement in terms of what happened when the sessions were over had significance. Assurances of non-disclosure also related to the use of video recording and participants were assured that I held this information securely and that I was the only one who had access (Watts, 2006). There were other concerns such as the insider role of the researcher that could have been a censoring presence and the participants could have held back the contributions they wished to make (Jowlett and O'Toole, 2006; Linhorst, 2002). Therefore, the creation of an ethical, safe and trusting environment was the primary role of the researcher when working with the participants (Gibbs et al., 2007; Sampson et al., 2008).

When using images, there are some additional concerns and in this research the repatriation of the image and ownership of these had to be considered (Banks, 2001; Buckingham, 2009). To satisfy this concern, participants were advised that they could have the original returned to them and could deny my use of this if requested. There was also a concern that participants may feel anxious using this method and so everything was done to reassure the participants that they did not have to do it if they felt uncomfortable (Galman, 2009). Additionally, consent was gained from the Dean of the School, who acted as the *gatekeeper* for the host institution (Creswell, 1998). She was made aware of the study, the process taken and was given copies of all methods, consent forms and the name of my supervisor. All of these aspects reflect good research practice and additionally conformed to the University of Birmingham ethical guidelines (See appendix 5 for ethical approval) and to the expectations of BERA (2011). I

describe these as the procedural and practical application of ethical consideration (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

4.6 Credible, Dependable, Transferable, Confirmable and Emancipatory: Criteria for Judging Quality in Feminist Research

Finally, the quality of the research is related to the credibility of the research in the claims made about the women and, more specifically, on my design, the methods used and the way I analyse the data. However, many of the terms used and the processes for establishing the quality of research are often considered as too positivist, with terms such as validity and reliability more associated with quantitative or scientific traditions (Seale, 1999). These terms are eschewed by feminist researchers who see these as patriarchal and androcentric (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Westcott, 1990) and not suitable for research in which absolute measurement is an impossible and unwanted goal. Denzin's (2009: 140) call for a model of qualitative inquiry that '*enacts a performance ethic based on feminist, communitarian assumptions*' suggests that, for naturalistic forms of inquiry, a new way of thinking about quality needs to be exposed. I have attempted to do this with a focus on reflexivity but I also draw on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria of quality. These are based on knowing if the research is *credible*, *transferable*, *dependable* and *confirmable*. For research that embraces socially constructed perspectives of reality within a Foucauldian view of subjectified lives, these criteria seem more appropriate. This becomes more significant as this research has a feminist intent and I propose that I need a quality mechanism that ensures emancipatory claims are upheld (Sarantokos, 2004). As such, I have

heeded Tracy's (2010) call to ensure the research contains *worthiness of topic, sincerity and meaningful coherence*.

The following is an overview of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria as applied to my research.

Credible: Lincoln and Guba (1985) replace the more positivist terms of truth and value with *credibility*. For them, member-checking (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) becomes a crucial process in ensuring credibility. This is seen in this research as an explicit process evident in the mediation interview, undertaken after the researcher's analysis of the image the participants created. It is also visible in my sending of both focus group transcripts by email to the participants to ensure that the information captured is as accurate as they recollect, and by making sure all biographical information is participant verified (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Letherby 2003). Furthermore, having colleagues check the analytical tables for accuracy (Brinkman and Kvale, 2005; Galman, 2009; Mannay, 2010) and even proof reading the work, is part of this member-checking process as it opens the research to multiple scrutinising views. It has to be believable as Denzin (2009: 149) states, if the research is not 'credible' the whole house of cards falls down'.

Transferable: This term is used instead of applicability and validity and can be seen within this research in the devising of a step-based approach to the research process that means it can be followed and used again. It is also evident in the analytical process in which the tabular format shows how this method can be used within other research contexts (Prosser and Loxley, 2008).

Dependable: Lincoln and Guba (1985) see this as similar to credibility and they consider the role of peer auditing as a way to enhance the reliability of the research. In this quality framework, it is possible to see the images as a concretisation of participant-defined concepts, which are explored further in the mediation interview. This iterative approach to data ensured a checking for accuracy and for meaningful coherence. In terms of peer checking, proof reading, checking of analytical tables and the role of the supervisor is embraced by this approach to quality.

Confirmable: This final aspect is an audit of neutrality or objectivity. For Lincoln and Guba (1985), this is self-auditing that, as reflexivity, provided a self-critical account of how the research was completed. In the section on reflexivity, I have adopted a self-aware and critical stance on my relationship with the participants in this study and acknowledged the problematic neutrality due to my relationship with the institution and the participants. I have been mindful, as Meyer (2001) warns, of the real danger of losing my objectivity and becoming too involved. This became relevant as I work in and for the institution, and I had a position of trust with the people studied. This danger increased as the research occurred over one year.

In addition to the auditing that Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest as mechanisms of quality, I am mindful of arguments surrounding the type of case study adopted and the number of methods that make the research *trustworthy*. Whereas some provide arguments considering case study as not offering robust forms of evidence (Miles and Huberman, 1994), Dooley (2002) argues it is the types of

methods and how these are used that assume greater significance. The adoption of one specific case could be a perceived limitation of my research yet like Dooley (2002) I have adopted an approach that seeks complexity and depth, and have used methods within this one case to enhance students' voice across an evolving timeframe.

I have attempted to use a mix of methods that allow me, as the researcher, to revisit the research to correct any errors (Cho and Trent (2006). This mix of methods is seen as crystalline as it offers multi-layered accounts of data, offering triangulation and confirmation (Tracy, 2010; Lambert and Loiselle, 2008). Applying *governmentality* as a consistent analytical framework helped me manage the layered data and heightened my awareness of any creeping bias. The iterative approach taken helped to achieve this as it allowed me to monitor and audit the research over time.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a consideration of how my feminist beliefs influenced my adoption of case study and how it was deemed commensurate with a focus on power through discourse and Foucault's construct of *governmentality*. Case construction was explored and the methods of data collection were outlined in detail showing how each was constructed and conducted. The coding process was detailed and the chapter ended with a consideration of ethics within the research and explored markers of quality within a qualitative paradigm. The following chapter covers the findings from the questionnaire.

Chapter 5: Motivation and Transformation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the questionnaire in which 30 women recorded their experiences of being on a Foundation degree and attitudes to Bachelor level transition. Foucault's construct of *governmentality* is used in which *technologies of power* and *technology of self* are defined by the tools of *resistance* and *surveillance* to describe and define functions of power. Findings from the questionnaire indicate the women as part-time students considered the Foundation degree they studied was a good foundation for transition and that at transition from Foundation degree to Bachelor level study most felt knowledgeable, confident and focused on achieving the Bachelor degree. The headings used in this chapter are those created by the descriptive coding of data using the lens of *governmentality*.

5.2 Social and Structural Intersections

Table 9 below shows the diversity of the women's ages, ethnicity, employment, vocational qualifications and specifically, in their non-student identities

Table 9: Demographic Information

	18 -20	21-30	31-40	41-50		
Ethnicity	1 White	6 Asian British	5 White British	8 Asian British	7White British	3 White British
Domestic Role	1	11	15	3		
	1 young adult	2 daughters	3 partners	7 mothers 1 partner	5 mothers 2 single	3 Mothers

	18 -20	21-30	31-40	41-50
		2 single 1 wife 1 mother	1 mother	1 partner
Full-time/Part time	1 full-time	11 full-time	2 part-time 13 full-time	3 Full time
Employment	1 Learning Support Assistant (LSA)	9 Teaching Assistants (TA) 1 Learning Mentor 2 LSA	10 Teaching Assistants 2 Early Years Advisors 3 Nursery Managers (NM)	1 Child Advisor 1 TA 1 NM
Qualifications	All entered using level 3 vocational qualifications such as NVQ, BTEC, CACHE, NNEB, DCE.			

What emerges from a consideration of the data in Table 9 is that the women undertaking a Foundation degree and transitioning onto Bachelor level study, experience a range of social and structural intersecting markers of existence. These confirm them as being *certain* types of students attending *certain* types of courses in *certain* institutions (BIS, 2011; Gorard et al., 2006; Yorke and Longden, 2010). This is additionally confirmed by the women's entrance into HE using vocational qualifications, being employed within a gendered and niche employment field, attending study as part-time students and, for some, beginning their study over the age of 21 years. This link of vocationally orientated study and Foundation degrees is noted by Foster (2009), Yorke and Longden (2010) and Woodley and Wilson (2002) and concurs with Reay et al.'s (2002) identification of older applicants entering HE with non-traditional entry qualifications.

For some, gaining these level 3 qualifications (NVQ, CACHE, BTEC, DCE) occurred immediately after the age of 16, whilst others experienced post-16 migration into employment, unemployment and domestic responsibilities,

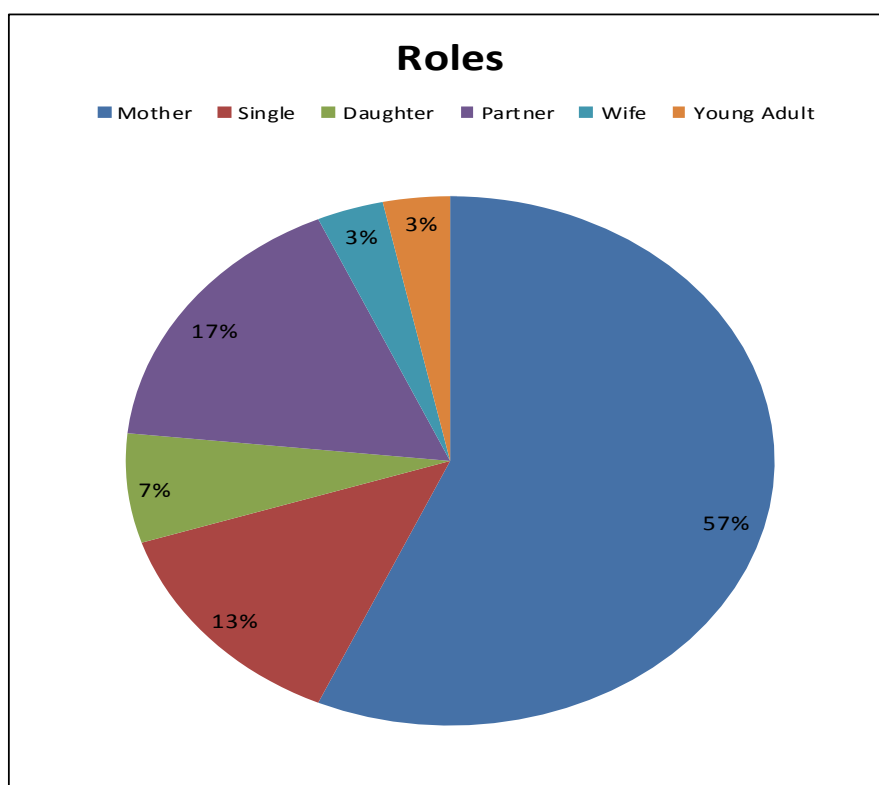
meaning that level 3 qualifications were gained later in life. All women had some form of break from formal study but this differed according to age and opportunity. For some women, especially those aged 18 – 21, this was a gap of two years but indicated various time scales, the longest of which was 15 years. Schuller and Watson (2009) identify this non-linear learning as typical of return to learners, which challenges assumptions of linear educational/employment trajectories (Leathwood, 2006). Therefore, age achieves heightened visibility as a social and structural classification when women study because it exposes potential learning vulnerability through reduced familiarity with academic discourse. This has more significance when the average age for this group of participants is exposed as 33, which is older than the age of 25 as claimed by Harvey (2009), Jackson and Jamieson (2009) and Craig (2009) for returning to study on Foundation degrees.

It is possible to see age as an important horizon of action (Hodkinson et al., 1996) in which rationalities of *choice* are defined by different points in a women's life course, ultimately meaning that the structural intersection of age exists for these women within an increase of their subjective social positions. This intersection of age and study begins to signpost the influence of discourse in shaping women's relationship with their study. This can be seen by most participants over 25 years of age occupying additional roles, as indicated by the words participants selected, designed to be *dominant* non-student identifiers. The words *mother* (17 women), *wife* (1 woman) and *partner* (5 women) emerge as the majority of social roles that influence the non-student lives of the participants. This mirrors a wealth of existing research in which social and

structural positions influence women's study (Brooks, 2012; Edwards, 1993; Reay, 2002; Reay et al., 2009; Wainwright and Marandet, 2010).

A significant feature within the responses was the choice of the word *single*, selected by participants across all age ranges. This word as their *dominant* non-student identifier, warns against a homogenised and conflating discourse of gender/domestic/maternal subject positions and age thus subjectifying all women within maternal and caring roles. Indicating a need to embrace a wider consideration of the patterns of women's non-student identity, it reflects Crenshaw's (1989: 139) concern in ensuring there is an understanding of the 'multidimensionality' of women's existence as this is where there is the deepest understanding of the power that constructs identities.

Figure 13: Ascribed roles



Further evidence of this caution in labelling all women within the maternal and domestic emerges as three participants added their own words, recording the word *daughter* (two women) and the term *young adult* (one woman). Two minority ethnic women in the 21-30 age group added the word *daughter*, identifying this word as a specific relationship descriptor of them as students (Bhopal, 2010) and the term *young adult* is selected by the youngest participant aged 20. The words selected on the questionnaire, although defined from a consideration of extant literature (Christie et al., 2008; Marks et al., 2003; Reay, 2003), may still reflect my researcher bias creating ethno-centric, middle-class assumptions of social and familial relationships. This is considered a pivotal weakness of the questionnaire design as it creates a researcher defined discourse capturing women within absolute categories of existence. Whilst it is possible to claim this tool as too limited to tease out the complex intersections of their existence, the interesting aspect here is how some of the participants were resistant to *my* discourse and *added their own* words to define their social identity.

As data begin to indicate, there is a linkage of age and declared social positions thus suggesting that for some women returning to study exists as a conduit for *biopower* that could invade their lives. This is only tentatively signposted at this stage, becoming a more substantial discourse within the individual interviews. However as the identifiers above suggest, *biopower* as influenced by study, is experienced differently and this exposes the complexity of *right time* narratives in which there is or is not a right time for study (Field, 2006; Reay, 2003) just a beginning point. This is considered in the rationalisation as motives given for a

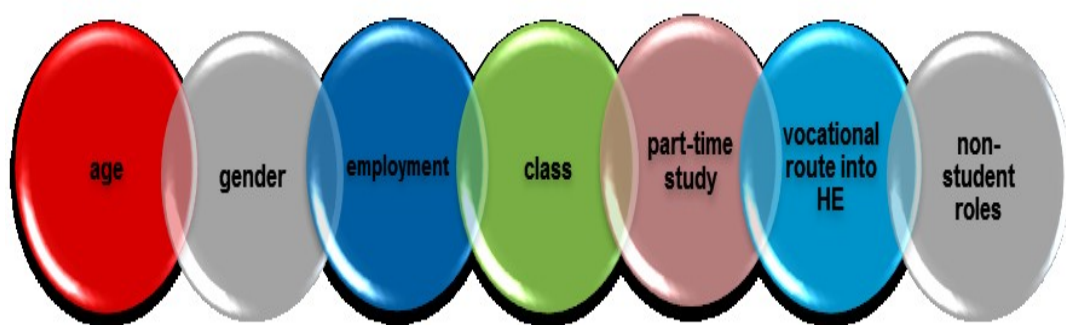
return to study, as shown in Figure 15. Whilst the Foundation degree can be seen as a *technology of power* since it encourages the intrusion of the two-way dynamic of home into study and study into home, there has to be a transgression narrative or one of resistance that means there is some benefit in this beginning to study.

Although class was not participant-defined within the questionnaire (it is in the case interviews), the employment roles undertaken by these women offer a tentative framework to explore class-based participation. Defining class is challenging and as Gorard (2008) states, using employment to determine class categorisation requires subjective judgement of the role performed. Additionally, forming categorisations based on parents' occupations has limited relevance for mature learners. Similarly, Savage et al. (2013) state that employment categorisations indicate what people do, but not why they do it. Therefore, like Blaxter et al. (1996), a self-recorded approach to ethnicity was adopted and a tentative calculation of class from occupations was developed using the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). This classification scale describes the women in this study as lower down the employment and social classification scales (ons.gov.uk, 2010) based on their occupations fulfilling semi-routine employment roles. It is impossible to make an absolute conflation between class and employment roles, but understanding the nature of these roles within aspects of stratified employment is imperative in exploring the discursive drivers for women's participation on the Foundation degree and transition onto Bachelor level study. It also helps to understand the role of discourse that captures these women on Foundation degrees within neo-liberal

accounts of participation. This neo-liberal account is linked to the rationalising discourse participants offer in order to ascertain why they, as women, let the biopower intensified by additional study into their lives. This rationality is displayed in Figures 15 and 16.

The information above provides a basic overview of the participants and their backgrounds suggesting, as Bowl (2001) states, that for women with additional roles, this background is integral to their relationship with study. Figure 14 shows intersections of structural and social existence that the women experience as power in this study and as discussed above, the influence of these intersections is relational to the individual as the ambiguity and plurality of power means some will experience more overlaps within their social positions than others and some experience these overlaps more intensely.

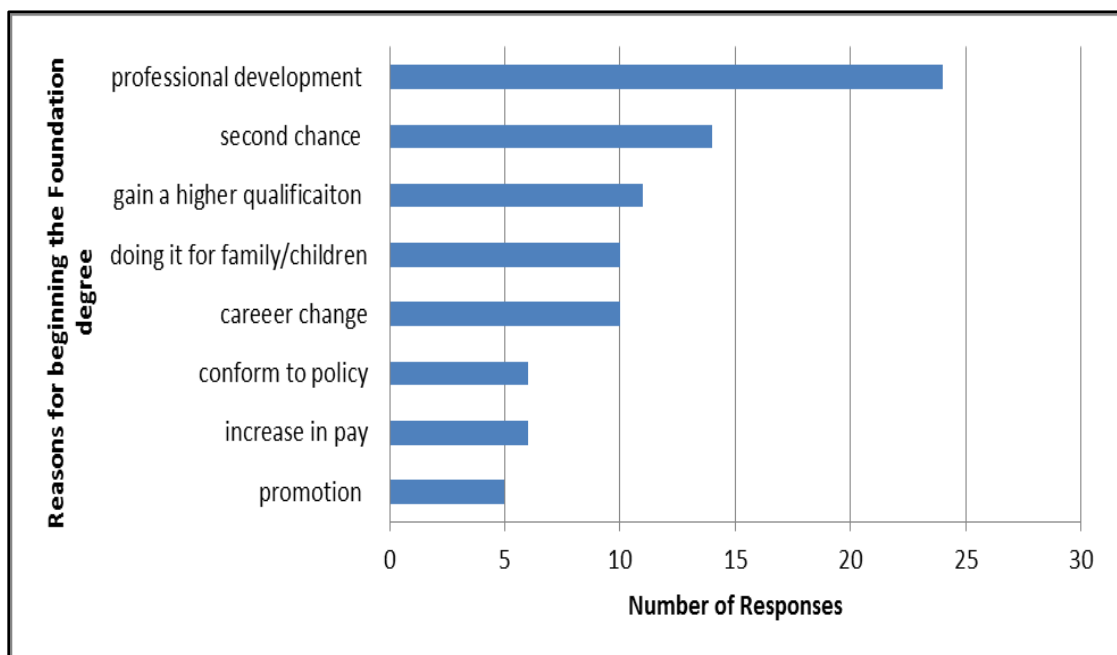
Figure 14: Data Defined Intersections of Existence



5.3 Motives for Study

As explored above, motivation becomes a complex area of power relationships as for women, motives are either productive or repressive, but all claimed motives informed or influenced change and are inherently individual. The individual case interviews explore this aspect focusing on the nuances of discursive power as it influences the identities of women. Figure 15 shows the results of participants selecting up to nine statements that *best* describe their reasons for starting study. Many opted for multiple selections indicating a diverse range of professional, academic, and personal motives for beginning their Foundation degree. The spike in the data shows professional development as the most commonly selected answer (Dunne et al., 2008; Griffiths and Lloyd, 2009).

Figure 15: Chart showing the number of responses to statements exploring motivation to begin the Foundation Degree



At this point in the women's study, changes in employment or career are not prevalent motives instead there is a claim to wanting to begin the Foundation degree based on enhanced professional development. Whilst at this part in their course this indicates motives based on being a more skilled worker, this also suggests as the women enter Bachelor level study there is a shift to a dual narrative of enhanced career prospects and personal empowerment creating a shift in the identity created. This duality emerges within the self-orientated selection of *second chance to continue my education* motive (Baxter and Britton, 2001; Fenge, 2011; Gorard et al., 2006), which was selected by 14 women, highlighting the role of the Foundation degree in providing a space for this right time narrative (Brine and Waller, 2004: 101, citing Barone, 1995).

That more women selected motives based on professional development may reflect these types of motives as potentially more socially acceptable and thus more legitimate reasons for study. They may have been selected to legitimise and justify time away from their home life and used to fend off claims of being a self-interested woman. If this is the case, it becomes a rationalisation in which employability and increased human capital balance more self-orientated motives as a way of ameliorating guilt, which Walkerdine (2003) defines as *survivor*guilt. In this explanation, motivation is a form of surveillance as it leads to a certain way of behaving and thinking because it places enhanced employability as an imperative for return to learning (Beck, 1992; Fraser, 2013). When considered in this way, motivation can be seen as a coercive force as individuals adopt socially or politically defined ways of behaving. When this happens, this is the very basis of *governmentality* as it ensures the dominant discourse prevails.

Figure 16 shows motivation to enter onto Bachelor level study indicating some subtle shifts. These subtle changes may be because the focus is on transition onto Bachelor level study and this is a more recent and contemporary event. It may be that the question, as constructed differently, alters the focus of the responses, nevertheless, a difference is evident in the motives offered for transition.

Reasons for entering onto Bachelor level study were explored using a five-point Likert rating scale and participants were asked to rate 14 statements with the aim that it would provide a wider mix of motivational reasons. Figure 16 shows these reasons and the number of participants who selected each is placed at the end of the line. To aid the display of this data, categories were reduced so *strongly agree/agree* became one category, *disagree/strongly disagree* became another and *neutral* remained as the final individual category of rating. This category reduction was necessary to reduce the amount of data to provide a meaningful display.

Seen in Figure 16 is a shift in motives as these women feel that entering onto Bachelor level study offers a widened horizon of possibility. In selecting motives based on employment and the changing of lives, they are aware of the opportunities they now seem to have. This may be that the Foundation degree could not offer this level of change but they perceive that the Bachelor degree can. That more women wanted to prove to themselves more than others that they could get a degree, indicates a balance within the responses in which there is a pragmatic realisation of enhanced employability, but tempered with less

instrumental reasons. This finding is similar to that found by Vaccaro and Lovell (2010) in which reasons based on personal self-orientated motives highlights intrinsic motives co-exist with instrumental drives. Additionally, motivation based on self-investment and self-motivation appears in research that explores the participation of mature students (Bye et al., 2007; Foster, 2009; Scott et al., 1998), specifically in a gendered context. Certainly, the findings here concur with those of Reay (2003) who identifies this co-existence of motivational forces in the HE experiences of women. Tentatively suggested it may also signpost the creation of a more agentic and self-determined approach to study.

Coercive motivation appears within the statement selected by 21 students that progression was 'necessary' because the Foundation degree was not a recognised qualification. This is already a known narrative within Foundation degree research (Dunne et al., 2008; Greenwood et al., 2008; Jackson and Jamieson, 2009; Mason, 2010; Morris, 2010) in which the qualification is seen more as reification of a widening of HE than in meeting students' academic or professional needs (Thomas, 2002). Therefore, this finding indicates progression on to Bachelor level study may be the result of some women feeling impelled to progress due to the reduced value of the qualification they have gained. In this argument, a Foundation degree only has the value an employer will bestow upon it and, as almost all the women here seek enhanced professional development as an outcome of their years of study progression, is therefore inevitable.

Figure 16: Chart indicating the number of responses to statements exploring motivation to enter Bachelor level study

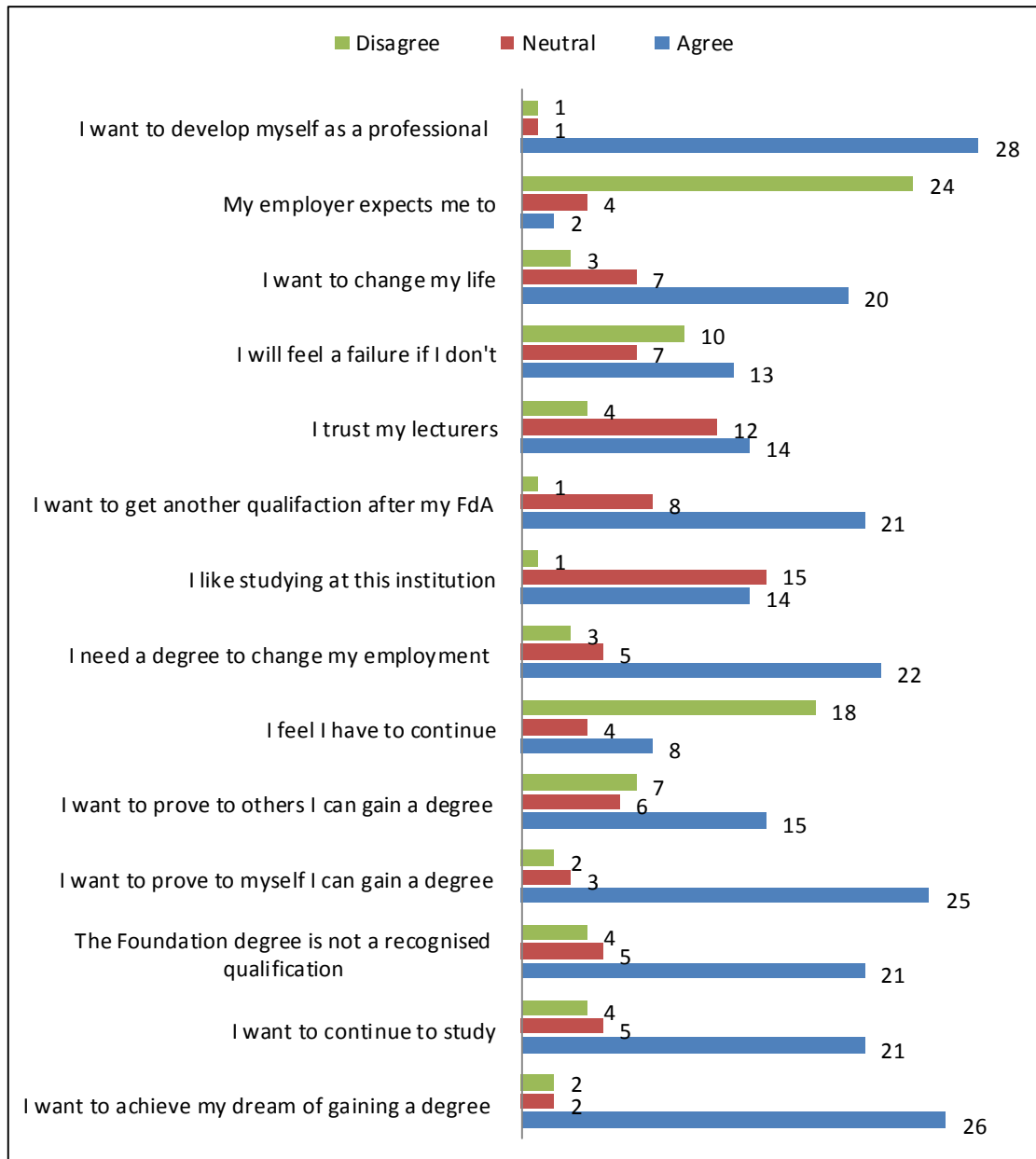


Table 10 shows the number of choices for the statement '*they have to*' which does not reflect those given to the statement about the Foundation degree as not being a '*recognised qualification*'. This may be due to the use of '*I*' as this may

place too much onus on personal decision-making. This means they do not personally feel they have to but the lack of recognition for the Foundation degree means they must.

Table 10: A Comparison of Bachelor Degree Progression Motives Taken from Data in Figure 16

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I feel I have to continue	4	8	18
The Foundation degree is not a recognised qualification	21	5	4

Ultimately, the findings in Figures 15 and 16 reveal a layered motivational account that appears at different parts of the participants' study. What this may reflect is the push and pull of the women's participation within HE. Participation seemingly begins with access to higher-level learning within professional and instrumental drivers becoming tempered by overlapping personal development and empowerment narratives the further they progress on the course. Progression onto higher-level study also seems to highlight an increase in the personal holding of power, which reflects the empowerment motives of HE participation as articulated by Biesta and Tedder (2006). Additionally, this shift in an understanding of power, suggests an increased level of resistance to externally orientated discourses that defined their Foundation degree participation which enables these women, as they enter onto Bachelor level study, to 'attain a certain mode of being' (Marshall, 2001: 85, citing Foucault,

1984). What seems to be appearing is the emergent creation of a self-improvement discourse in which self-determination and personal liberation are goals of their participation, but still existing within complex relationships to personal, socially and politically created discursive power.

5.4 Institutional Discursive Regimes

This set of findings, based on students' views of the institution, indicated power working both productively and repressively for individuals in different ways. This is seen in the data in Figure 16 that gives reasons for internal transition.

Responses show a relatively balanced response in which *liking to study* at the institution was a mix of agreement or neutrality to this statement, and the same was true for whether internal transition was linked to *trusting* lecturers. Findings from Barron and D'Annunzio-Green (2009), Bowl (2003) and Leese (2010) indicated that the lecturer occupies an important transitional role for non-traditional students and this is particularly explicit in the research of Bingham and O'Hara (2007). However, this is less clear in this study. It is acknowledged that the large number of neutral responses could be associated with the words selected to reflect shortcuts for a wide range of complex concepts embedded within internal transition. The words *trust* and *like* may have been too subjective or emotive when used in this context and, as an insider researcher, I have to consider that this response could have been resistance to my participation and power within the research.

Table 11: A Comparison of Bachelor Degree Progression Motives Taken from Data in Figure 16: Motives for Internal Progression

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I like studying at this institution	14	15	1
I trust my lecturers	14	12	4

Additionally, the lack of a more forceful response raises concerns over their potential captivity in this transitional process, as they are internally progressing students who may feel unable to leave to study elsewhere. This may suggest that there is a sense of compulsion rather than a real feeling of *choice*. The omission of a box for additional comments could have denied students the opportunity to add their own comments and this is acknowledged as a potential oversight in the design that focused on brevity and concision. However, this was explored in Chapter 7 within the focus groups, which considered participants' views on internal transition

There is a similar feeling of this ambivalence to institutional discursive regimes when students respond to statements about the support sessions offered in the bridging required for Foundation degree to Bachelor degree progression. This provided a 50/50 split in which 15 women did not attend these bridging or support sessions and 15 women who did. The 15 women who did attend used an attitudinal rating scale of 1 as *very useful* and 5 *not very useful* to record their attitudes to the support sessions offered by the institution. Out of a potential 41 sessions attended by 15 students (four did not attend all of the sessions), over half felt the sessions were not useful to them. Table 12 shows this as a balance

of positive and negative with a strong number of neutral responses. This could be broken down into the sessions held that are identified here as *effective academic writing, dissertation support, and individual support sessions*, but a similar pattern appears. For some, these sessions were useful and for others they were not helpful at all and the case interviews explore why.

Table 12: Student Responses to the Bridging Sessions based on concepts of ‘usefulness’ to Progression: Question 11

Very useful/useful	Neutral	Not useful/Not very useful
16	11	15

This finding is interesting when considered against responses given in Figure 17, since all students felt they were prepared by their Foundation degree participation to progress onto Bachelor level study. This may mean that these sessions have limited value because these women as students already feel prepared for the new level of learning. Non-attendance at the sessions may be the participants’ way of showing their enculturation into the institution and their familiarity with the academic codes the institution has introduced them to through their Foundation degree participation. It may be that, as Field and Morgan-Klein (2010) state, as students these women find themselves *betwixt and between* as they have completed their Foundation degree and are transitioning onto Bachelor level study. They are still students but they are different students. This presents institutional discourse as surveillance in trying to impose an identity on

participants, and participants in their non-attendance are active in their resistance to this.

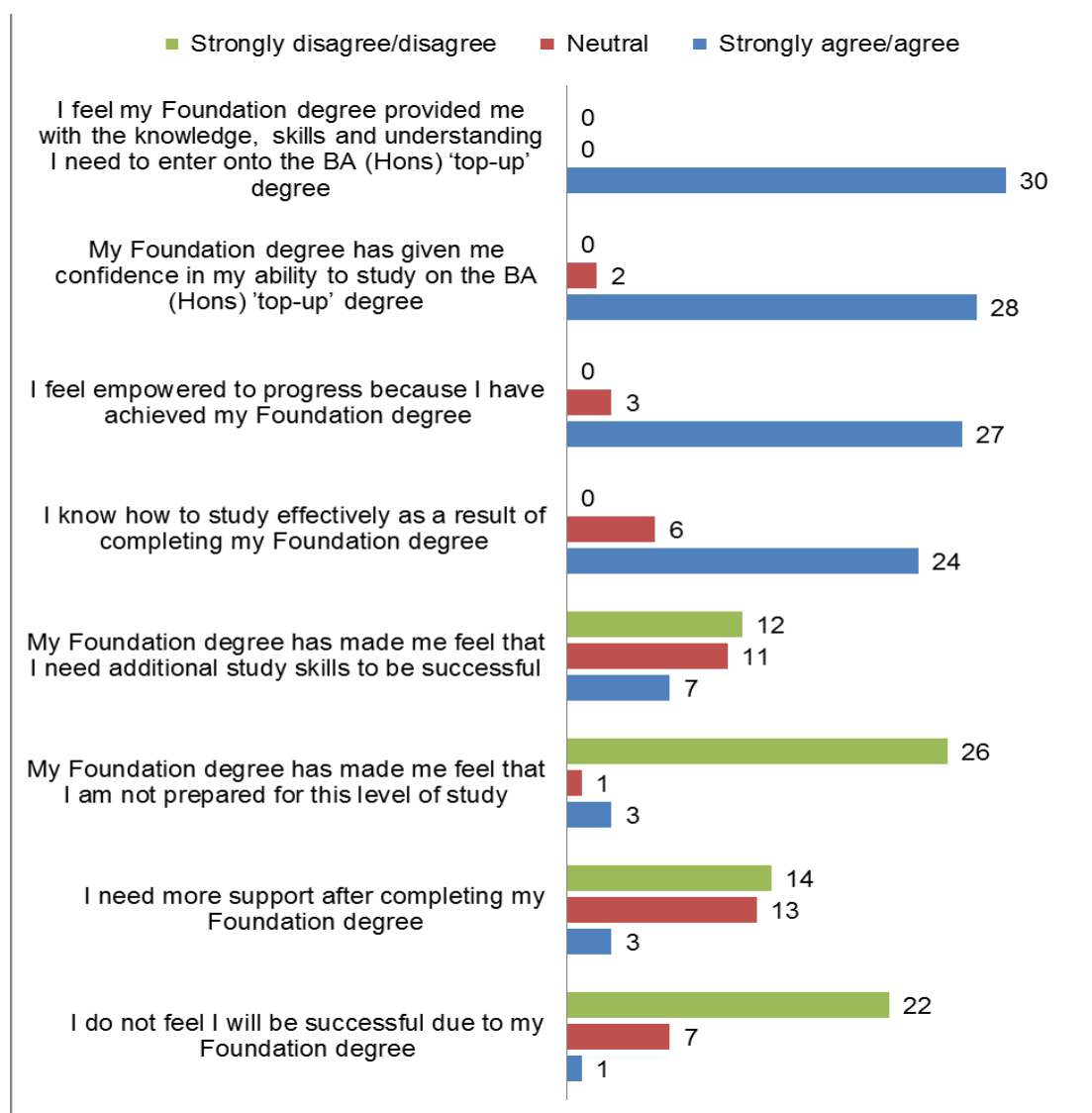
Foucault's (1975) construct of institutional discourse as a regime of truth makes it possible to see these support sessions as a continuation of the organisation's culture, 'values, beliefs, understandings and norms' (Daft, 2000, cited in Greenbank 2007: 210), which potentially is something most feel they know. As the descriptors discussed below identify, many of the participants see themselves as capable learners and authentic learners as Figure 17 indicates, this is due to the women's perceptions of the Foundation degree providing them with skills and confidence to progress.

5.5 Transformation and Change

The most consistent finding was that all of the participants felt their Foundation degree supported the development of a strong attitudinal capability and increased academic skills. This suggests the Foundation degree as a liminal space, where power and transformation can exist side by side in the process of identity creation. This is evident in the women feeling their Foundation degree enabled them to transition onto higher-level study. This potentially places the Foundation degree as a *technology of self* as it leads participants to feel changed and, as the data expose in Figure 16, this change can lead to *new* life, *new* version of self, and hopes of *new* employment. This finding also concurs with existing research that places Foundation degrees as sites of personal and professional empowerment, and of the development of academic skills and

deepened subject knowledge (Dunne et al., 2009; Ooms et al., 2012; Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Robinson, 2012; Tierney and Slack, 2005).

Figure 17: Chart indicating the number of responses to statements relating to perceptions of the Foundation degree



The data in Figure 17 show Foundation degrees as inculcating changes in academic and personal beliefs and facilitating a new future self to emerge. A belief in a new and transformed self is linked to the statements selected in Figure

16, which indicated the emergence of self-orientated motives. It was evident from the data collected that all students felt their Foundation degree supported their sense of efficacy in the transitional process. This was an important consideration as the timing of this survey meant they had only attended two weeks at this level and students were making judgements based on this limited experience, but this finding is more a reflection of their capability as learners. Whilst this may reflect Barron and D'Annunzio-Green's (2009: 18) belief that students engage in a 'honeymoon period' and their perceptions may change, it may also be evidence of a permanent change in their sense of self.

Figure 18: A chart showing a comparison of ability at the beginning of the Foundation degree and Bachelor degree

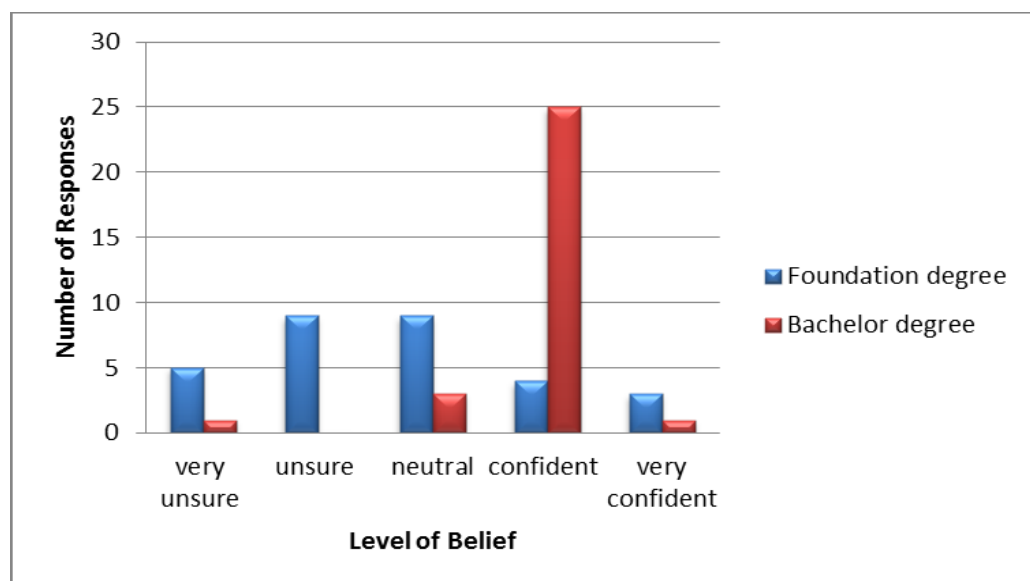


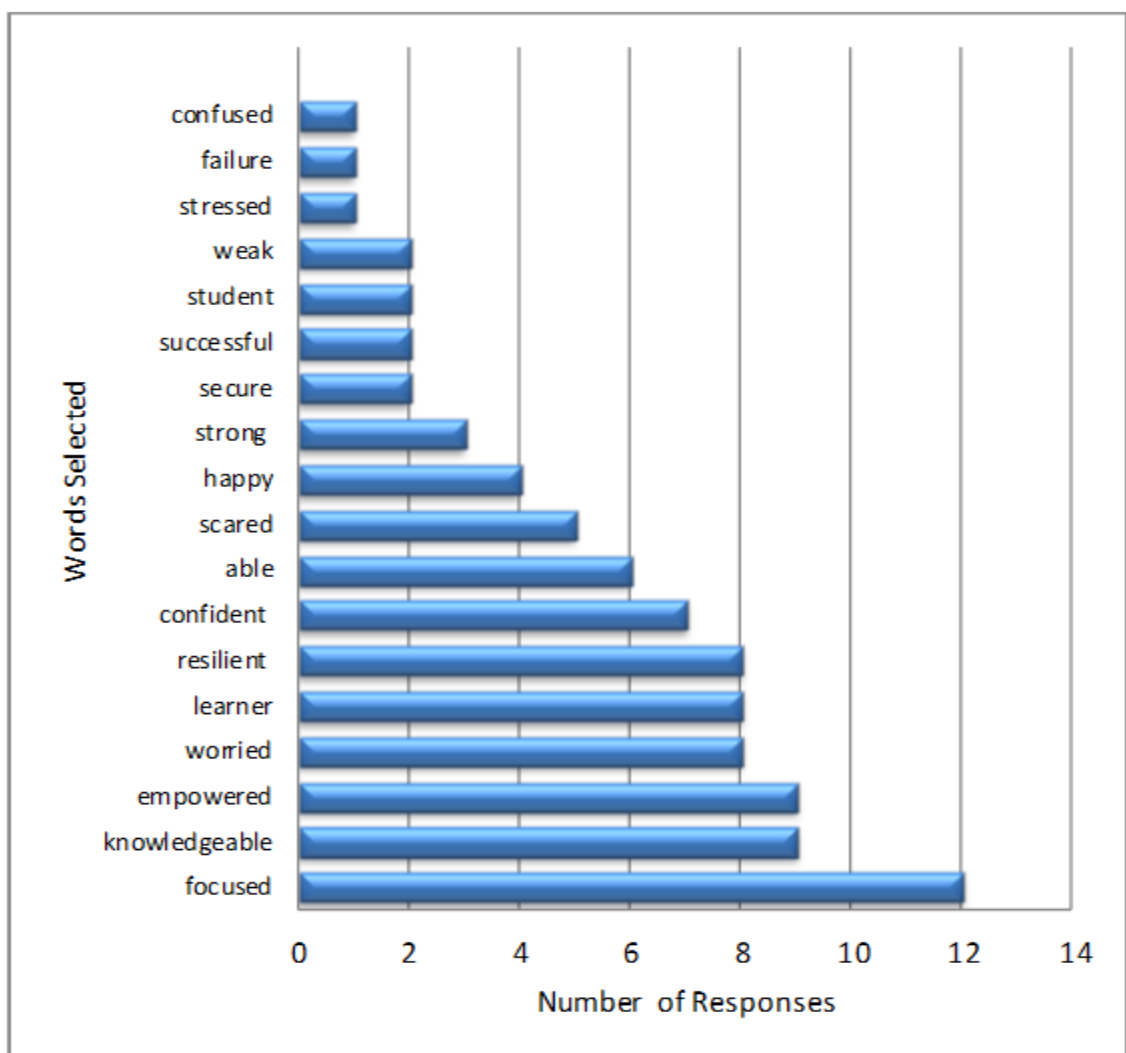
Figure 18 illustrates a shift in levels of belief from Foundation degree to Bachelor level study. The respondents score themselves on their feelings or beliefs about their ability to achieve based on their entrance on to the Foundation degree and

again as they started Bachelor level study. This increase in academic ability as they enter the Bachelor degree was an expected finding, but the majority identifying themselves as feeling confident may confirm that being exposed to a continuation of institutional academic discourse and knowledge may have increased participants' levels of confidence and ability. This finding suggests one of the benefits of internal transition is that students can develop a consistent academic identity, which encourages them to feel confident and sure of their ability. This appears as a considerable benefit to students as research that focuses on Foundation degree transition from a dual sector context identifies this sector difference and transition as negatively influencing the preparedness of students to study at Bachelor level (Bingham and O'Hara, 2007; Morgan, 2013; Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Winter and Dismore, 2010). This shift in confidence may be created by their internal transition as Morgan (2013) noted, students benefited from the knowledge they had of the institution within transitional processes. When the Foundation degree functions in this way it becomes a *technique of self* since gaining this qualification reinforces the participants' self-confidence and self-efficacy.

The final part of the questionnaire findings as shown in Figure 19, invited participants to select three words or add their own words. It is worth stating that just one added the word '*stressed*', suggesting these words were appropriate identifiers. This process was designed to create a discourse trace that operated as identity talk as it exposed a learner's beliefs about herself. The participants' selections fell into the following permutations; three positive responses; three negative word choices and some with a mix of both. What was unexpected was

the frequency of the positive word choices. Dividing the words into classifications based on positive and negative indicators of academic and personal belief and identity, there were 52 positive and 28 negative word choices recorded. The most prevalent choices were *focused*, *empowered*, and *knowledgeable*.

Figure 19: A chart showing the frequency of the selection of three self-describing words



These words shown above conform to the cognitive, dispositional, and attitudinal discourse as discussed by Sheard and Golby (2009) and Beasley et al. (2003)

and locate these choices within the ability to feel able to meet challenges. The word '*focused*', as taken from Glogowska et al. (2007), defines determination and drive and needs to be considered with the motivational discourse offered in Figure 16 and the claim that for many of the participants, completing the Bachelor degree is their achievement of a dream and something that is just for them. When participants selected words such as *focused*, *empowered* and *knowledgeable* the Foundation degree functions as site for productive power that made these women feel able to achieve and more resistant to failure. This word choice therefore, suggests a productive self-governing discourse indicating a strong level of confidence and in the word *focused*, high levels of personal drive.

This word selection also creates a counter narrative based on apprehension and concern. Whereas the positive words indicate women as capable and positive learners, the negative words reflect identities that appear fragile and vulnerable. A possible explanation lies in seeing power as localised and individualised and this may be what the women who identified negative words to define their feelings experience. What this finding signposts is that the Foundation degree did not offer a boundary crossing without hesitancy and concern for all students.

What emerges from the data above is the *possibility* of seeing the Foundation degree they completed as an external confirmation of their ability but one in which some women still feel unsure. This uncertainty of self-belief may be the result of external concerns or the legacy of expected failure and difficulty. Either of these reasons presents a negative self-governing discourse that may continue to challenge perceptions of ability. However, whilst this is a pertinent

consideration, it is worth considering that only three women selected all three words as negative words and seven selected two positive and one negative, which suggests vulnerability but not impossibility.

5.6 Chapter Summary

What emerged from the data was evidence of the Foundation degree increasing students' level of academic self-belief and providing skills, confidence and knowledge in order to transition on to Bachelor level study. What the self-descriptors indicated, was a mixed response as for some there was still a certain amount of hesitancy in fully believing in their ability to achieve.

The findings in this chapter revealed motivation acting as both instrumental and self-orientated drivers for participation and personal change. This indicated a certain co-existence but there was a slight shift to more self-orientated motives as women entered onto Bachelor level study. .

Although this chapter highlighted certain issues with the questionnaire design, findings raised important conceptual questions that highlighted significant aspects to explore in the image-based case interviews and focus groups. These related to *decisions* or *choice* for staying within the same institution; *reasons* for progressing on to Bachelor level study as an individual account; why they entered on to the Foundation degree when they did and if and how they have changed. The following chapter continues with the findings from the image-based case interviews that used graphic elicitation to aid participant narrative reflection.

Chapter 6: '*It's about working hard...it's about staying afloat*': Individual Accounts

6.1 Introduction

This chapter contains an analysis of the five image-based case interviews and mediation interviews that took place just as the women had completed their Foundation degree and entered onto Bachelor level study. Using Foucault's (1980, 1994) concepts for understanding power identified as technologies of power and self and the tools of *resistance* and *surveillance*, the analysis highlighted critical moments within the women's participation that influenced their Foundation degree participation and their approach to their transition on to Bachelor level study. Each account includes narratives focused on and around this critical moment supported by images and video stills that add emphasis, reinforce, or supply meaning to the offered narrative. When viewed together, the images and text form an intertextual framework (Allen, 2000) as multiple points of information can be read as a strong and coherent narrative that tries to 'rediscover a lost totality' (Foucault, 1969: 122).

This totality is the presentation of a coherent story and not just disembodied bits of data waiting for a meaning. The use of images, video and narratives is intended to create a total account and enhance the credibility of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) as I wanted this analysis to show it is *their* image, next to *their* photograph, next to *their* text offering a triangulation of authentic data, additionally participant-checked in the mediation interview.

6.2 Individual Accounts

Each story begins with a brief biography that intends to show these women not just as participants in a research study but their lives. The narratives revealed tell of limited family support, personal difficulty, delayed participation and negative school experiences. What becomes apparent is that whilst this is a case of internal transition within one institution, each woman interviewed offers unique perspectives of this process. That they come to this point from personally and socially diverse perspectives refutes a homogenising account of women as students and the diversity of their experiences can be seen in the images they produced and within the narratives offered. All the participants offer images that show differing relationships to power; some show this within a linear image whereas others offer a spiralling and looping account.

The scope and sequence of this section are outlined in Table 11 and this provides an overview of each participant narrative under a heading identified from their stories selected because they encapsulated experiences of Foundation degree to Bachelor level study.

Table 13: Overview of Participant Narrative

Image	Participant	Overview
1	Shabana	<p><i>'I had to prove something to other people but now this is me proving to myself that I can do something'</i></p> <p>Her story is one of transformed self-belief within an experience of participation that is complicated by additional family roles and responsibilities. The Foundation degree proved to her she could study and progress onto the degree.</p>

Image	Participant	Overview
2	Parveen	<p><i>'It's about working hard...it's about staying afloat'</i></p> <p>Parveen sees her transformation on the Foundation degree appear through her acceptance of personal responsibility. She feels that working hard is the best way to achieve and she sees herself as pivotal in making this happen. In her narrative, her children are what motivate her to continue her study and to stay afloat.</p>
3	Sue	<p><i>'I suppose I never felt very academic at school'</i></p> <p>Sue's story is one of difficulty in which her academic story is overshadowed by a diagnosis of a learning difficulty that, as unrecognised, had created difficult past relationships with study. Positive intervention and support increased her belief in being able to enter the final year of the BA. Being on the Foundation degree and gaining success led to her feeling like a transformed person.</p>
4	Ayesha	<p><i>'I passed I felt like a flower that I had blossomed and that's my story'</i></p> <p>Ayesha presents a transformative account in which the Foundation degree allows her to blossom and to be what she wanted to be. Like the other participants, her study is intersected by external demands and responsibilities, but she is able to complete this transition and achieve.</p>
5	Kate	<p><i>'It's a road to success'</i></p> <p>For Kate the Foundation degree is a race against herself and her dreams of a new career. Her linear image is very different to the other images drawn for this research and reflects her subjective positioning as single, white and middle class.</p>

The diversity of their narrative accounts demonstrates differential relationships to power. Power was felt immediately upon entry, for others it was experienced as gendered forms of power and domination evident within their subjective

positioning. Although structural intersections of class, ethnicity and age are evident other gendered and parallel sub-fields for some including caring roles, family expectations, working full-time and a general juggling of their other non-student lives intersected with their learning (Reay, 2002; 2003; Snape and Finch, 2006; Walby et al., 2012). Their narratives explore the complexity of *choice* to participate with decisions made at pivotal times in their lives.

The first image is from Shabana who always felt overshadowed by her additional family roles and responsibilities. When analysed, her story highlighted four critical points that indicate her complex yet transformative participation.

6.2.1 Shabana's Story: 'I had to prove something to other people but now this is me proving to myself that I can do something'

Background

Shabana described herself as a '*plodder*' or someone who just '*gets on with it*' and feels she developed this feeling from her family background. She stated that she is from an ordinary Bangladeshi background and said in her interview that she felt she could be working class but was not sure. She felt that although her family were aware of the importance of education, she never really felt challenged to achieve in the way she felt she could. She left school at 16 with a range of GCSE qualifications, but for family and personal reasons, she did not feel she could continue to study past the age of 16. Ten years later and now married with a small child, she enrolled at the host institution to complete an NVQ in Early Years Care and Education at level 2. After this, in 2005 she began

her level 3 version of the same NVQ course to increase the level of her qualifications. She decided to do this whilst working as a teaching assistant in a local primary school as she needed a level 3 qualification to comply with local authority employment criteria. She also added that she wanted to widen her career options, deciding that she did not want to be a teaching assistant all her working life. Therefore, she decided to return to study whilst working full-time as a teaching assistant and bringing up a young family. In 2007 after gaining her level 3 qualification, she enrolled on an Access course to Higher Education in a local FE college with the intention of entering onto a Foundation degree at the host institution the following year.

Entering onto the Foundation Degree

In 2009, at the age of 33 she enrolled on the Foundation degree 'Professional Studies in Learning' in the host institution, wanting to develop her knowledge of working with children aged 3 to 8, and with the hope of progressing onto the BA top-up degree. Whilst in the first year, she received very good grades for her work and this continued to improve into the final year of her Foundation degree where she achieved an overall mean mark of 72%. As she gained 240 credits, she was able to progress on to the BA and even though she was worried that her grades would fall, her first two assignments showed she was able to meet this new level of learning and she passed them both with high marks.

In our first meetings, it was clear she had entered onto the Foundation degree with a very clear career plan. This included gaining her Foundation degree, then her Bachelor degree and eventually Qualified Teacher Status so she could

become a Key Stage 1 teacher working with children aged 4 to 7. However, after completing her Foundation degree and progressing onto the Bachelor degree, she decided against being a teacher working with young children. Instead, she turned her career focus onto lecturing in post-compulsory education, feeling she had changed so much in herself and in her understanding of education that she did not want to return to working within a school. This was not who she was anymore.

Non-Student Identity

Shabana identifies herself as a wife and a mother with four children. She has a husband and a large extended family comprising of her parents, brothers and sisters. During her Foundation degree, they all shared a house and this made life very difficult for her. At the same time, she found out she was pregnant but decided to remain on the course continuing to study part-time, work full-time and looking after her large and growing family. Further difficulties followed as she was also renovating her house and experienced post-natal depression after the birth of her daughter.

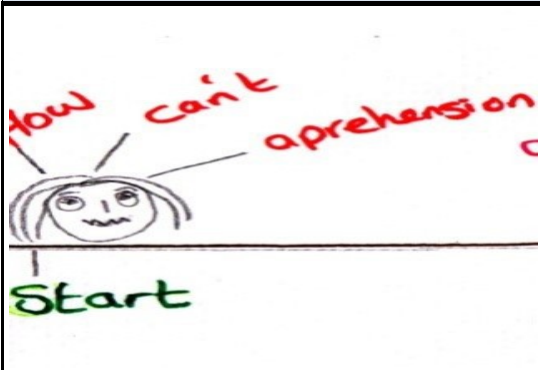

After Graduation

At the end of her study, Shabana felt she achieved more than she had hoped as she was awarded a first class degree in Early Childhood Studies; a degree accredited by a local prestigious institution. After graduation, she enrolled on a full-time postgraduate certificate in post-compulsory education in a nearby HE institution. As she needed a placement for her course, she applied for and was

given permission to complete her teaching practice in the host institution, working in the FE department on a range of level 2 and 3 Early Childhood and Health and Social Care courses. Upon completion of her course, she hopes to secure a full-time lecturing place in the host institution and work on the same Bachelor degree courses that she studied and enjoyed.

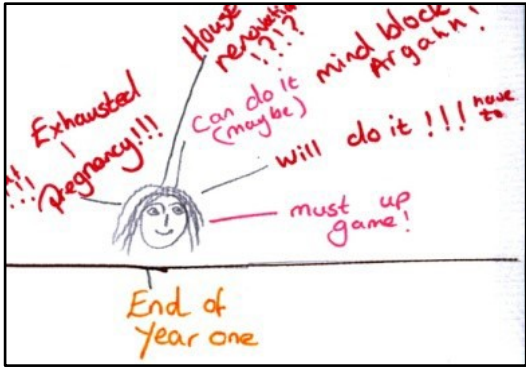
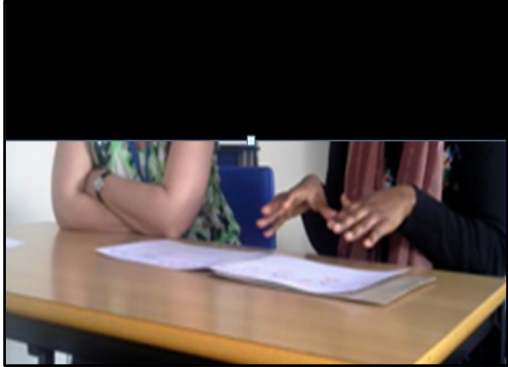
Shabana's Image

The image below shows four critical moments that highlight her lack of confidence, poor self-belief and complex difficulties influencing her ability to study, but also her ability to resist and achieve. Drawn as a timeline of her experience over two sheets of paper, she begins at her entry onto the Foundation degree and ends with its completion, additionally highlighting the end of year one and the middle of her second year on the Foundation degree as difficult and critical times for her study. Shabana's use of colour that underpins the narrative, enhancing its meaning becomes an important aspect of this image.

Critical Moment 1: Starting at the Beginning	
IMAGE	VIDEO
	
<p>Transcribed Narrative</p> <p><i>I've pinpointed (inaudible word) to start off with when I started the course I was like how am I going to do it. I probably can't do it. I was a bit apprehensive about the fact that you know meeting new people meeting challenges and then maybe failing them cos that's what I thought I thought I'm no good I won't be able to do it</i></p>	
<p>Commentary</p> <p>She designed her image chronologically across two sheets of paper showing her experiences from the start of her Foundation degree to its completion and the beginning of her Bachelor level study. Her first critical moment comes at the beginning of this narrative where she offers words of self-doubt and concern. The video picture shows her hand emphatically indicating the significance of the word 'how'. When explored further in the mediation interview, she reviewed this gesture and the radiating dialogue, stating that she knew she was going to do it, but was just not sure 'how' she was going to do it. This forms the first critical point in her narrative as it indicated resistance to her feeling of fear. In the mediation interview, when asked about her use of colour in this part of her image, she confirmed this was a deliberate choice. For her, green indicated a 'fresh start' and red was her fear of failure. She continued; 'I felt fresh and I had all the energy' but she knew it was going to be difficult.</p>	
<p>Theoretical Links</p> <p>Technology of Power</p> <p>The narrative above shows her shaping her own negative learner identity</p>	

by acts of self- surveillance and self-monitoring behaviour (Grimshaw, 1988; McNay, 1992). Even the brief section of dialogue above shows this as self-domination through discourse as she questions her ability as she 'probably can't do it'. This is further reinforced by her belief that she is 'no good', reflecting experiences of women who begin HE after a break from study as identified by Bowl (2001), Morris (2010), Reay (1998) and Reay et al. (2002). Her specific use of the personal pronoun 'I' emphasises this lack of confidence and in claiming her potential failure, she provides a self-dominating discourse indicative of 'return to learners' (Jones and Thomas, 2005; Thurgate et al. 2007) where failure is an anticipated outcome of their participation in HE (Leathwood and O' Connell, 2003; Tobbell, 2007).

Critical Moment 2: Intersecting Complexities

IMAGE	VIDEO
	

Transcribed Narrative

I was juggling work, family, uni work ...there was a bit of.... You know.... I had house renovations they'd just started but I was relieved that I'd done it and I thought I needed more support at home and who I could turn tothere were not many people and then towards the end of the year I got pregnant and I was exhausted and I was finding it hard to kind settle down and do some work cos I had morning sickness and everything like that and children.. as well as house renovations ...really it was like fullblast....

and all that time though ...even though I had completed 2 modules erm ...erm and I had come to the end of year 1, I was still thinking you know I am really going to do it and at every stage I must admit this there was always.. I always had a mind block in the middle . I'd start off with I can do this. I know what I'm doing then I'll get a mind block in between and then it's just coaxing myself getting away from the house to work and try to do it but It was towards the end of the year and I thought right I'm going to

determine erm... I'm determined I will do it erm.. I have to do it but then at the end of year 1 I thought I need to improve my work.

Commentary

This is an important part of her narrative and she returns to this image many times in her story (00:3.29, 00:04. 15, 00:07:56, 00:08:16). The influence of this point in her study can be seen by the spread of her hands, as shown in the video still, as they encompass the whole timeline whilst discussing the influence these intersectional forces had on her life and on her study.

Her image at this point shows a range of radiating statements identifying competing demands on her time. The statements she uses show her participation at this time as a tensioned personal discourse; it is both demotivating in the range of complexity offered yet motivating as she reflects a personal resistance to failure; albeit one that is hedging and lacking in absolutes. In the mediation interview she confirmed that the causes of worry were coded in red because they were making her fail and those that were '*urging her on*' were written in pink to show the difference between the two ways of thinking at this time. This can be seen in the image above, when she writes '*must up game*' and offers a hedging statement '*can do it (maybe)*' but also exclaims '*will do it!!! have to*'. This form of externalised dialogue reflects her description of her defiance and determination offered at the end of her narrative above, but also her realisation that this is a difficult time for her.

In the mediation interview, she discloses her perceived '*hitch*' of '*academic writing*' and that the work '*is more academic a bit more challenging*'. The use of the term '*mind block*' shows how her worries impinge on her ability to study, but she feels she can escape from this by '*coaxing myself ..getting away from the house to work and everything like that*'. She feels that separating her home and study will enhance her ability to study, but that she has to try harder to prove to herself that she can do this.

Theoretical Links

Technology of Power

Shabana's narrative shows how her non-student subjective positions influence her participation. That this form of subjective positioning intersects within study for women is a known discourse within research that

explores the complexity of women's study (Baxter and Britton, 2001; Crozier et al., 2008; Fenge, 2011; Fraser, 2013; Reay, 2002). Additionally, her use of the word '*juggling*' describes her response to these demands as trying to ensure that she is capable of doing everything and not letting anything 'drop'. Significantly, Shabana's narrative identifies the influence of power within her inhabited positions and she indicates the friction generated when she tries to resist this influence. In her narrative, this resistance appears in her claim of '*getting away*'. In this, she creates a demarcation between home and learning and, as a form of transgressive behaviour (Byrne, 2002), it shows her wanting to leave her family role to 'break out of domesticity' (Baxter and Britton, 2001: 87). This is especially relevant as she bears the full load of domestic responsibility (Alsop et al. 2008; Baxter and Britton, 2002; Bhopal, 2010; Wainwright and Marandet, 2010; Wright, 2013).

What it also reflects is the biopower that exists within mature students studying in which the Foundation degree, as an opportunity structure, acts as a 'Trojan horse' identified by Beck (1992) as this policy driver that directly influences the life of the individual.


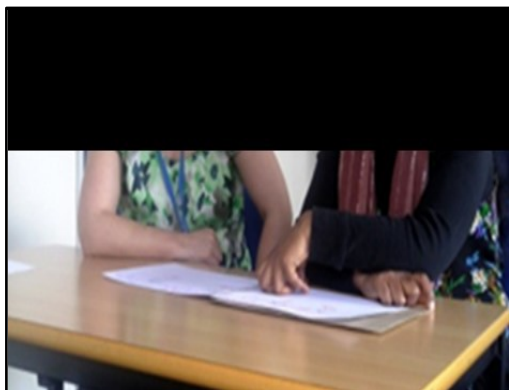
Techniques of Self

The narrative above shows the duality of power in the productive forms of resistance and power as domination that exists within the discursive framing of her as wife, mother and worker. This resistance appears as a strong self-motivational discourse of determination that in its production, is a technology of the self. In this, she externalises her intention to achieve and thus shows herself as someone capable of self-determination and deliberate self-transformation (Allen, 2011). As a form of personal development, it shows the positive and transformative aspect of this power (Macleod and Durrheim, 2003) as she can show resistance in her quest to change and be something different. As such, she presents herself as resilient to these encroaching difficulties and in so doing, she reflects research on mature women as being more resilient when faced with trials and subsuming domestic, personal, and professional responsibilities (Kasworm, 2010; Morris, 2010; Wright, 2013). In her new self-determining approach to her study, she is demonstrating her ability to understand herself; to know who she is (Rose, 1999) and who she wants to be.

Whilst in some ways symbolic of the pressure she feels under to achieve, she shows she can generate an intrinsically orientated motivation that sees the drive to be better and to improve come from within her (Sheard, 2009) and this reflects a personal coercive discourse of self-determined

improvement (Crossan et al., 2003). Even within the repressive mechanisms working against her, she is still able to disrupt this power, resist its influence and try to have some ownership of her future

Critical Moment 3: Wanting to walk away

IMAGE	VIDEO
	

Transcribed Narrative

all of that ...at one point it got me down but I was ready to think about just take a year out ..and I came like I'm.. I was about to walk out one day and say I can't do it I have to come back maybe when the baby's slightly older and when I have gotten through some of my depression and problems and .. I thought.. It's one more year out of my life it just became like that erm and I just plodded on and carried on erm and again I mind you all that time even though I had a lot of things going on the assignments was did I didn't have a mind block because when I think back work kept me going kept me motivated to work a bit harder to get over the problems to get over them because I had this to do... it gave me a purpose if you know what I mean erm

Commentary

Whilst it may appear that this critical moment is similar to the one described above, the difference here is her consideration of leaving the course. Whilst her concerns are similar to those experienced at the end of the first year, in this section she describes these as making her want to defer or withdraw. Whilst this shows the pressure she was under, it also shows her determination at this point on the course and her resistance to the external and internal forces acting on her.

She used the colour red and when asked about this in the mediation

interview, she confirmed it made her '*feelings stand out*' as this was a '*dangerous*' time for her as she was thinking of leaving. Clear in her image is her justification for remaining on the course as she is able to defend her decision to stay by claiming it is just '*one more year out of my life*'. She also uses colour in her word 'resilience' that, written in pink, presents a counter discourse to the red used as a warning. The radiating dialogue she offers becomes a coercive motivational discourse as she tries to coax herself to continue; she says she, '*must do this*' and '*can't give up*' but this is juxtaposed with her capitalised cry for '*HELP!!!!*' as she seems overwhelmed.

Emerging in her narrative is study as a form of self-help or therapy and as a means of escaping her complex life. In the mediation interview, when asked to clarify what '*work*' meant she said it was her studying and that this gave her a '*purpose*'.

Theoretical Links

Technology of Power

In this part of her narrative, her subject positions exert an important influence on her participation, making her want to give up her study, something acknowledged by Vaccaro and Lovell (2010). When this happens, it becomes a restraining force on her participation seen in her self-monitoring narrative that claims ownership of her inability to cope and in her belief that she cannot '*do it*'.

Technology of Self

There are indications here of her resistance to this '*dangerous*' narrative as she tries to self- negotiate and by 'ameliorating' her guilt (Walkerdine, 2003: 243). When she says, it is just '*one more year*', she is applying as rationality to her decision to remain and as she does this, she shows she can transgress these difficulties and can act otherwise (McKee, 2009; Tobias, 2005). The word 'resilience' describes how she feels about herself as a learner who is someone who can survive and this narrative reflects Harvey et al.'s (2006) conclusion that there is a link between student retention and their claims of resilience. It is here that her use of key dispositional traits emerges and like Sheard's (2009) dispositional framing in which women who survive HE exhibit commitment, control, and hardiness, they are positive and powerful techniques of the self.

Amongst her feelings of doubt, she offers her study as a site of resistance because what makes life difficult for her also gives her a purpose. Thus, her claim of the Foundation degree as a 'purpose' reflects Foucault's (1980, 1994) belief in the practise of freedom as the beginning of self-liberation within resistance to forms of power (McWhorter, 2013). Being on the Foundation degree is therefore something specific and personal in which she can create a new trajectory of self (Giddens, 1991), showing that at this stage of her learning she has found a site for the 'practices of liberation' (Foucault, 1988, cited in Allen, 2011, p.56).

Critical Moment 4: End of The Foundation Degree: Beginning of Bachelor Level Study

IMAGE



VIDEO



00:07:09

Transcribed Narrative

I came to the end of the FdA and I was like .. it was a struggle getting there but at the end of it.. I thought wow yeah I've done it now I've got a certificate to say that I have completed my foundation degree I was like ecstatic that I'd done it erm ... and I thought again well I can do this now so more than anybody I think I proved to myself that I can do it because before I used to feel with anything that I wasn't very confident as a person I'm probably still am not and I hid it a lot and I know I hide it but before you know I wasn't I just felt that at every stage of my life I had to prove something to other people but now this is me proving to myself that I can do something I'm not sure erm so yeah

Commentary




This final section has two parts covering the end of the Foundation degree as the image above shows, and her feelings as she enters onto the

Bachelor level study. Although it is a continuous narrative, it is divided for two reasons. Firstly, because of its size and secondly, to show the importance of both aspects of her experience at this point. These parts join in the theoretical links section to show their interrelation and relationship to her experiences whilst studying.

The image she identified here shows a head with a large smile and a range of positive and self-congratulatory statements enhanced by exclamation marks. In the mediation interview, when asked about her use of colour here, she stated that purple was used because it gave her 'a pat on the back'. For her, it was a deliberate choice as it reflected a change in her feelings about herself and her ability.

In the narrative above, she admits that the process was difficult but her use of words like 'wow' and 'ecstatic' confirm her pleasure with this achievement. Her hands in the video wave up and down and although this is not visible, she is smiling broadly. The narrative above presents the Foundation degree as something extremely emotional and very empowering. Phrases such as 'done it!!!' and 'yeh!!!' accompanied by abundant exclamation marks make this a very strong image of achievement which is what she confirmed in the mediation interview by stating, 'it is the emphasis on the fact that wow it's finished'. The word 'certificate' is used in her narrative as proof of her achievement that she can 'do it'; 'well I can do this now so more than anybody I think I proved to myself that I can do it'.

Heads as transformational markers

Beginning of the Foundation degree	End of the Foundation degree	Expected size of her head at the end of honours level study
		
		00:09:37

Transcribed Narrative

Ok it started off cos I started out a bit like not sure maybe I can do it maybe I can't do it I think it was just as I was doing it that's how it's come about as I thought about the start .. I thought I went in .. oh my god and then when I saw all the work like that and I was like ok but I felt smaller then .. a bit relieved as well as not sure what I was going to do but as I 've progressed I think I became more defiant I think that's what I'm trying to say here these heads

Yeah.. it will continue and if I was I would probably do that again for my BA cos.. no.. actually I'd start from actually here because its although it's the same kind of thing there's a lot more work involved there's a lot more expectations academically from the BA but yeah I think I'd start off here so the line would continue and then maybe hopefully at the end of the BA my head would be that big.....they would be bigger yeah as I progress as I obviously..you know.. it's me proving I've done it and erm yeah I've kind of reached a final.. you know a final destination I can say I have got a degree at the end of it. The FD was not easy to get there and the BA won't be easier but maybe I'll enjoy it more as I've been through the process and I'll enjoy it a bit more because at the moment I have that again I have a mind block

Commentary

The narrative above continues her consideration of her completion of the Foundation degree and her feelings as she progressed. The heads were an interesting aspect of her development as each one signified a shift in her feelings or confidence. The narrative above shows this and she confirms it in the mediation interview where she reflects that she did not mean to do it, but she can see why she did it.

By drawing the first head small, she depicts her doubt in her ability as and ultimately her prospects in, succeeding. She states she felt '*smaller*' at this point in her study and in the mediation interview, she says this was because she had limited knowledge of the level needed upon entry. This feeling is shown in her use of '*oh my god*' to show this as a form of shock upon entry.

She confirms that the change in head sizes is linked to her increased self-belief and her '*defiance*'. However, she indicates that since being on the Bachelor degree her head is now the size shown at the end of Year 2 (critical point 3). It is not as small as the first head but still represents a change in size. Seen in the video still above, is that she feels her head will

continue to grow and she holds her hands wide to show the size of the head she thinks she should have after she has completed her Bachelor degree. When asked about this in the mediation interview, she feels she can do it, but she discloses her apprehension and ultimate fear of gaining a '*third class degree*'.

She is aware that Bachelor study is not easy and she feels she understands the increased academic level required. She also indicates that she may enjoy it more because she has '*been through the process*' and she knows what to expect.

Theoretical Links

Techniques of Self

I am starting with techniques of self as there is a strong thread of active and personal change evident. This section of text shows her as a transformed learner with a clear sense of her academic ability and learner identity. The heads signify her development and transformation, as she is able to see a future-imagined self and attain a new way of being (Foucault, 1984). Her words *emotional* and *empowered* need to be seen in the context of her claim that she had never felt confident and that she always had something to prove. She makes it clear that she had the desire to do it and prove she could do it for herself. As a 'told you' narrative, this is found in research on women such as that within Wainwright and Marandet (2010: 459) and McCune (2010) but here it becomes a self-surveillance behaviour monitoring her risk of failure and coercing her to achieve and be successful. For her, the Foundation degree is a site of liberation as it has developed her confidence, allowing the emergence of a more confident, assured person to emerge as she progresses onto higher-level study (Brine and Waller, 2004; Osgood, 2006; Scott et al., 1998).

Therefore, the Foundation degree is a technology of self as it is the 'certificate' that reifies her success and proves she is authentic when working at this level. It is a tangible object of her achievement and concretised proof of self-transformation. Thus for her, the worth of the Foundation degree is more than that ascribed to employment advancement or financial return (Molesworth et al., 2009; Walker, 2008). For her, it is a testament to her ability to achieve and enhanced self-confidence. Even her use of colour adds to this sense of change and success becoming a success discourse through her use (Kearney and Hyle, 2004).

She also demonstrates a strong reflective capability and is able to make meaning from her difficulties and previous experiences. The ability to seek meaning through experience is critical in transformation and essential if it is

to feel authentic (Mezirow, 1995; Foucault, 1994). It is clear she has a realistic approach to these increased academic expectations (Tierney and Slack, 2005).

Technology of Power

It is worth noting that this is a much smaller part of her discourse but it is still evident and although there is a strong sense of optimism and she presents herself as transformed, there is still a reminder of her subjectified difficulties that are a prominent feature of her participation. Therefore, transformation still incurs a cost (Giddens, 1991).

Image Summary

In the four critical moments identified within Shabana's narrative, she shows herself resisting forms of repressive power created through her subjective positioning. Her image and her narratives tell of her trying to have some ownership of her academic success. This ownership began with her feeling that she was unable to study and lacked knowledge. Whilst she showed fear and doubt, she challenged and resisted this internalised discourse and hesitantly began to believe she could achieve. That she felt changed and empowered at the end of her Foundation degree is something she claims for herself. By gaining the Foundation degree, she gained a form of liberation from her feelings of inadequacy and this feeling provided her with a positive academic foundation on which to move forward.

It is also possible to see the duality of power in that it can produce access to higher-level learning that creates sites of personal change and liberation, but it can also bring with it the complexity and guilt for women with additional roles who study. Although Shabana showed herself as able to resist this repressive

power, there is that ever-present threat of overload and risk of withdrawal and failure.

6.2.2 Parveen' Story: 'it's about working hard...it's about staying afloat'

Background

Parveen states she is from a working class Pakistani background. She never really felt her family supported her early education, but she says she enjoyed school and left with five GCSE qualifications. For family and other personal reasons, Parveen decided not to take her education further, instead she married and started a family. When her children were older, she decided to become a child minder as it suited her family situation but it also meant she could work with children, which had been a long held career aspiration. She enjoyed being a child minder but as her children grew older, she wanted to take her study further, first by gaining her level 2 childcare qualification and then her level 3 NVQ in Children's Care, Learning and Development. She is adamant that gaining her level 3 qualification was the catalyst for her enrolling on the Foundation degree as it gave her the confidence to begin her study in order to achieve her dream.

Entering onto the Foundation degree

In 2009 at the age of 32, Parveen enrolled onto the Foundation degree. She recalls feeling very apprehensive when she began due to the gap in her study, and she felt conscious that she was older and had been out of what she defined as 'formal' education for a while. She felt she could do the work but

she was sure she would be different from what she perceived would be younger and cleverer students on the course. Upon entry of the Foundation degree, she stated her desire was to be a teacher and this remained with her for the duration of her study.

Parveen achieved steadily on the Foundation degree making slow progress in the first year and developing her grade profile in the second year, achieving an average of 52%. She made the transition to Bachelor level study achieving 48% and 53 % in her first modules. She sustained a profile of over 50% throughout her study and was awarded a lower second-class honours degree.

Non-Student Identity

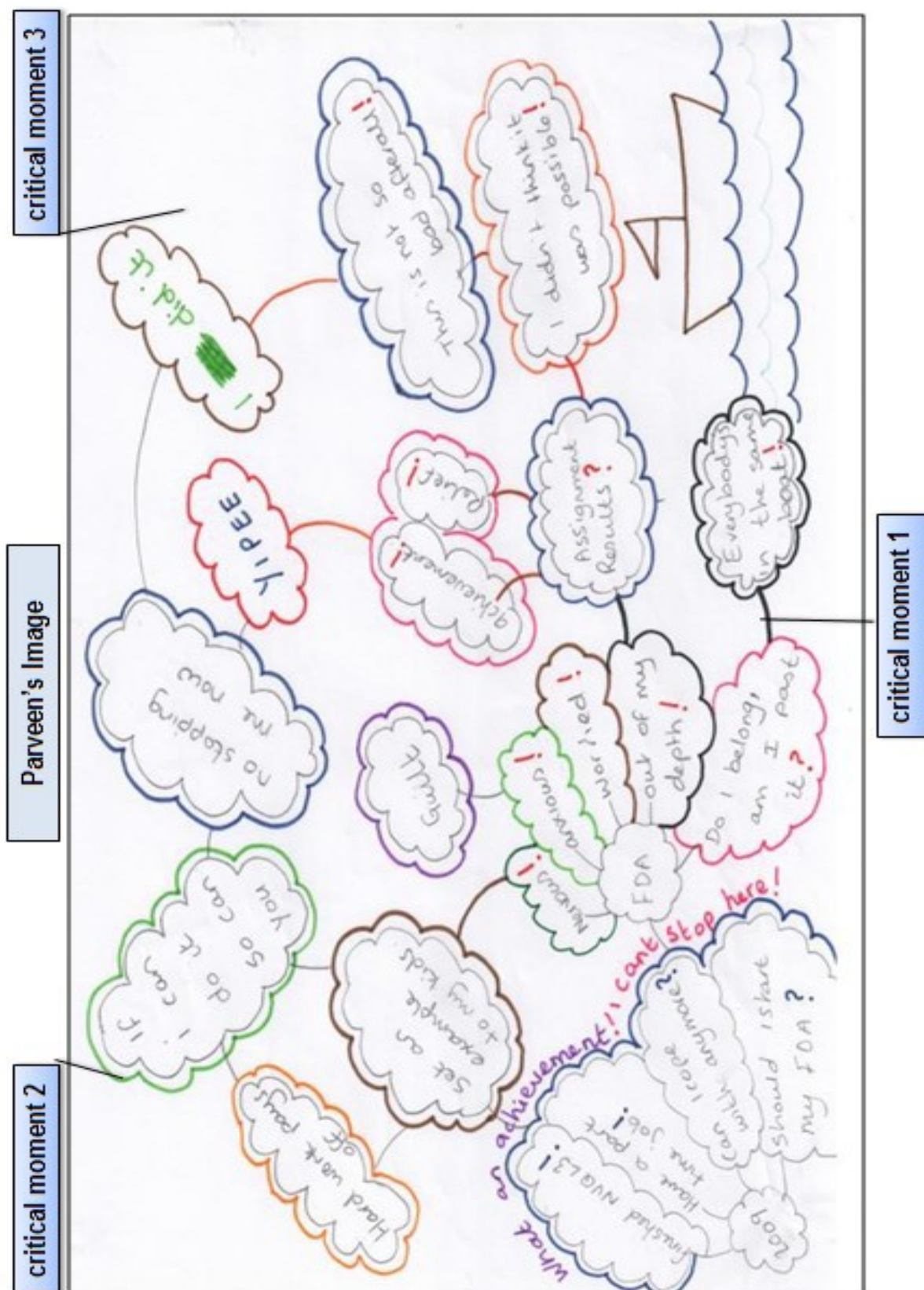
Parveen tells of her complex family situation, which involves supporting her children's' education, caring for her four children, her husband and her larger extended family. She also has a family in Pakistan and she had to return recently for a family bereavement. At home, she does all the household chores and still works part-time as a teaching assistant.


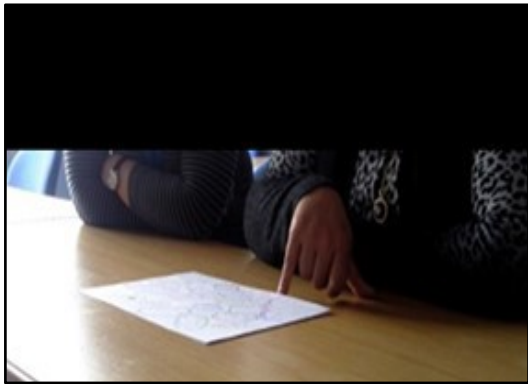
After Graduation

After graduating Parveen decided to take a year away from study and spend some time with her family. During this last year, she was accepted for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education course in a local HEI and was due to begin her teacher training in September 2015.

Parveen's Image

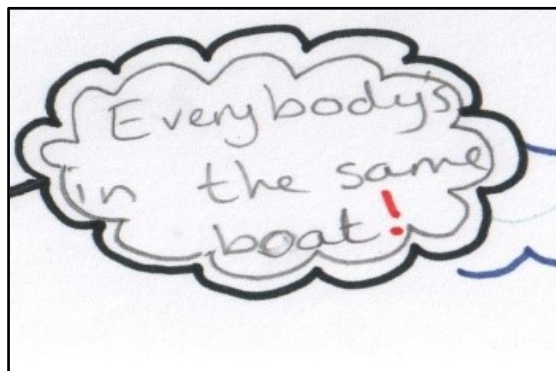
Parveen produced a non-linear narrative in which the image is read left to right, with thought balloons radiating out and revisited at different times in her narrative. Upon analysis, it was clear there were three specific parts of her narrative that, as critical moments, influenced her study on the Foundation degree and her opportunity to access Bachelor level study. These three critical points are the beginning of her study after a long break, her increasing self-belief and the need to prove she can achieve to herself and her children, and finally her completion of the Foundation degree and transition onto the Bachelor degree.



Critical Moment 1: Being and Belonging	
IMAGE	VIDEO
	 <p>0:02:11</p>
Transcribed Narrative <p><i>when I decided to come back and I was scared I was nervous I was anxious I was out of my depth I was just thinking do I even belong here cos I thought all these other people that have come here they must have been in education they're so much cleverer than me</i></p> <p><i>so I started and the first day was horribleabsolutely horrible gothanded out lots of lots of assignments and on the way home I said to my husband don't worry about next week I'm not coming back don't have to worry about picking me up cos I'm not going back and also I got to type it all and that was the worst thing as I had to go on a computer I had not gone on a computer for years the only thing I knew was to switch it on .. and that's it so ..'</i></p>	
Commentary <p>This section of text is divided into two sections each focusing on one part of this first critical moment. The first part is her perception of the beginning of the Foundation degree and the second is the confirmation and legitimization offered by her passing her first assignments. As the main image shows above, Parveen did not approach this image task as linear and within a chronological order, but depicted her image as a set of interconnected events with associated emotional responses. This created a looping timeline which began at the passing of her level 3 and linked back and forward to other thought balloons and experiences.</p>	

It is evident that the beginning of her Foundation degree was an important moment as it acted as a catalyst for her future relationship with study. Having achieved her level 3, she had a break in her study that left her with feelings of doubt and anxiety. The radiating balloons include words like 'anxious', worried, and 'nervous' all punctuated with red exclamation marks. As she states in the mediation interview, she did this to draw attention to these feelings that indicate her lack of self-belief and her assumption that she will be different and not belong. The video still shows her pointing to the words 'do I belong, am I past it?' showing this perceived lack of community allegiance that she bases on her gap in her study and her age. She assumes she will not fit a 'normal' student identity, as she is older and has children, things marking her as 'different'. In the mediation interview, when asked to reflect on her image of a boat and the words 'everybody's in the same boat!' she says she found out 'I belonged to that sort of people cos we all felt the same we all had families and children and it was difficult....it was hard to keep going'. The image of a boat is her way of trying to show how they all belonged but also how it is a place of safety as later in the interview, she states 'she doesn't want to drown'. She also describes others who were 'drowning' with the level of the work. This is her language of survival and fear of failure, but also of motivation, as she wants to work harder so as not to fail. When this image of the boat was discussed in the mediation interview, she said that being on the Foundation degree is about 'working hard...it's about staying afloat'.

'Everybody in the same boat'



Transcribed Narrative

I didn't think it was possible .. that I could even get er.... an assignment result that was worth it.. I got a result I got a grade sothat wasn't too

bad after all I got I er made an achievement it was a sense of relief that I was not gonna fail people were dropping out cos we started in September with 20 and we'd come down to 16.... But I did it, I got result after result and it.. it was just hoping for a pass each time and then eventually a pass was not good enough I need to aim a little bit higher..

Commentary

The narrative above tells how she felt when she passed her first assignment. As the balloon shows below, this made her feel she could achieve and her thought balloons indicate the 'relief!' she experienced especially when compared to other students who were 'dropping out'. However, emerging from this narrative is a determination in which she is 'not gonna fail' and this leads to an escalation of her expectations. This offers a dual motivation based on a fear of failure and the increased expectancy of success; both make her want to 'aim a little bit higher'. Using the pronoun 'I', she locates the responsibility of this personal development within her; it is what she wants to do.

Enlargement from the image above:



Theoretical Links

Technologies of Power

Like Shabana, Parveen experienced additional concerns in her study as she began her participation at a life point when she had other competing roles and responsibilities. As such, this shows that returning to study can be a form of *biopower* that creates friction between and within her intersecting complexities mainly formed by age and gender (Archer and Hutchings, 2000).

Parveen's narrative illustrates the duality of power as offering a complex blend of productive yet constraining mechanisms on her participation. For

Parveen, there is the power of belonging to a group and knowing that they are like her in age and in her domestic identity. This need to belong to a group was significant for Parveen as it reduced her feeling of marginalisation. The Foundation degree in this institution becomes a normalising experience where she does not feel overly different or that she is '*past it*'. Her original doubting narrative is a self-surveillance mechanism as it regulates her expectancy of success and achievement. When she does this, she applies self-scrutiny as she does not wish to appear deviant or different (Sawicki, 1991). This response is very similar to the way Shabana faced her return to study and is a known discourse in return to learn narratives (Morgan, 2013; Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Reay, 2002; Crozier and Reay, 2011).

What we can also see is Parveen's awareness of the personal and symbolic nature of passing her assignments. She senses this achievement as a form of productive personal and academic power as she understands this as a form of codified belonging (Bernstein, 1996) in which she acknowledges the academic power that is a regime of control on her participation (Foucault, 1996). This means that passing the assignment made her feel authentic and it was symbolic of her right to be there. This legitimisation proved she could do this and that she belonged to this level of working. That this became a catalyst for her continued development is evident in later narrative sections. For Parveen, passing this first assignment is a demonstration of how power can turn into resistance and ultimately liberation (Foucault, 1980) as she remains on the course and achieves.

Technology of Self



For Parveen, being in a supportive environment created the right power relations for the possibility of change and personal transformation. Parveen's relief at her lack of deviance and her normality when she enters the Foundation degree shows the positive alignment of institution and student. This reflects a known discourse in which minority ethnic students are funnelled into institutions with people like them (Archer, 2007). Whilst this is often seen as a negative process of hierarchical power functions and elitist discourse, Parveen sees this *belonging* as a source of comfort that contributes to her ability to achieve. On this course, she finds she is *normal*, which is important for new groups of learners especially for those who identify with a minority (Meeuwisse et al., 2010). Additionally, as Reay (2003) and Reay et al. (2009) found, students responded positively to

social belonging and being in a place that welcomes students like them. What this social grouping reflects is the dual functioning of power that captures individuals within a specific institutional discursive regime, but acts as a regime encouraging students like Parveen to attend higher-level study.

This need for mutual recognition reflects Bhopal's (2010, 2011) work on minority-ethnic women in education who seek out this form of collective allegiance and identity. This collective sense of belonging places Parveen within both group and, potentially, institutional allegiance, creating strong bonding capital (Reay, 2002; 2003) and a site for potential resistance and change. It appears that Parveen's personal and social identity is reinforced by this group allegiance as she realises students have similar biographies and as she makes this connection, she moves from the margins of her study to feeling more able to achieve and authentic as a higher level student. For Foucault, authenticity is pivotal in any transformative process (Foucault, 1978, 1994). Additionally, this collective experience of belonging and shared identity enhances her opportunity for transformative learning as she makes meaning of her new learning within this social setting (Mezirow, 1997).

In her narrative, *'I was not gonna fail'* she creates a personally located motivational and internalised discourse. In passing this first assignment, she is beginning to create a new version of herself; one that is beginning to be transformed by study. She demonstrates core dispositional attributes that act as an internalising discourse of success; these are that she shows commitment to her work, feels in control of it and displays levels of hardiness that allow her to show resilience (Sheard, 2009, Sheard and Golby, 2007; Beasley et al., 2003). Her resilience is resistance to failure.

Critical Moment 2: Inspiration, Motivation and Difficulty

IMAGE	VIDEO
	

0:05:49

Transcribed Narrative

and it was to set an example to my children so I did the FdA to see if I was on the same level then it came round to the BA and that I'm not stopping and I can do it and if I can do it you can which comes back to setting an example to my children.....

I haven't done this for myself because if you always want your children to do really really well then it's hard work that gets you to do really really well. You have to put the effort in so I've put the effort in and I expect them to do just the same because I'm putting the effort in with 4 children with a job and a husband that's worse than the children, with a familywith 2 families one back home and one here there are so much responsibilitiesI am juggling all these things so my reason for going back to education was to set a good example for my kids and show other people that it can be done after having a family cos time and time again we just get told you're a mother now you shouldn't be doing anything else because of your responsibilities you should just settle for bringing up your family

Commentary

Parveen sets out how this text needs to be interpreted and exposes her children as the motives for her participation and transition. This is important as Parveen's phrases '*hard work*' and '*put the effort in*' reflect the way she wants to present herself to her children. In the mediation, when asked what this really meant to her, she says she wanted to be a '*role model*' and her reasons for going back to study were to earn more money and to show her children that you get things when you work hard. As the video still shows, her hand is sweeping from these words on the left hand side across the whole image as this section is a strong part of her narrative account and

reflects the foundational reason for her participation.

What her account also reflects is the complexity of her life when foregrounded by her study. She presents a list of things in her narrative that she has to deal with and explains about her family and her family circumstances. She uses the word '*juggle*' to illustrate the choices she has to make that allow her to study, work and care for her family. Parveen as a student and a person exists at the intersection of these forces. In the account above, she says '*we just get told you're a mother now you shouldn't be doing anything else because of your responsibilities you should just settle for bringing up your family*'. It is clear she is reacting against criticism or comments made and this creates dissonance with her desire to be a good role model for her children.

The balloon in the image refers to her belief that '*hard work pays off*' and when asked to clarify this statement, she says that it was meant to reflect her investment in her learning. For Parveen, this was all the '*referencing and critical analysis and stuff like that....I think it helped me get a grip on things like time management*'. In the mediation interview, she comments that the Foundation degree '*was good*'.

Theoretical Links



Technologies of Power

As seen in a previous narrative account, Parveen exists within a tensioned and power infused form of participation in which she tries to do what is right for all, including her. Her narrative above presents her as investing in aspirations of enhanced employability and an improved self. For Parveen, the definition of 'good mother' is one who is a strong and positive role model who works hard and hopefully, will gain a higher paid job because of this investment (Skeggs, 1997; Burke 2002; Hodgkin, 2010). In her narrative above, she suggests she has been criticised for her participation and feels she is represented as transgressing normal bounds of motherhood as good mothers stay at home and look after their children. In this debate, Parveen finds herself trapped within competing gendered discourses of being a minority-ethnic mother, wanting to be a good family provider, and wanting to be more than she is. For Parveen, she exists within a matrix of ethnic identity, motherhood, employment and parallel extended family responsibilities (Walby et al., 2012; Alsop et al., 2008) and neo-liberal aspiration. In this, she exists as a woman trying to have it all but with the potential to lose it all. For her, hard work is the only way to reduce

this risk and, as such, this reflects a neo-liberal account of individualisation in which as a self-interested woman she risks everything to be who she can be (Reay, 2003).

Parveen's narrative more than most shows this cross over between Foucauldian power relations, especially in her experience of transgression. Her transgression in resisting what her family think she should be may be a productive site of power as it leads to new and better versions of the self; but it still comes at a high personal and familial cost. This cross over between the two forms of power shows how discourse can create productive sites of power but, as Parveen shows, this is dependent on the individual's ability to recognise this as a site of personal liberation; if not, it exists purely as a form of power.

Critical Moment 3: Completion and Transition

IMAGE	VIDEO
	

Transcribed Narrative

I didn't think it was possible because that's almost like I've done it yes I've done it I felt like I was going to stay afloat .. and I didn't think it was possible considering when I was so anxious and out of my depth and worried and didn't think I could get that far. I didn't think I was going to get there considering how I felt on my first day. I didn't think I was going to get that far but I did and then like I said I was looking back on it I thought it's not as bad as I thought it was at the beginning .. and it can only get better because I'm gonna learn so I will know how to .. understand better to improve everything that I've done. I've come this far and I've improved because my grades tell me so, because my tutors tell me so and their comments. I can do it. I can carry on and I can do some more....

Commentary

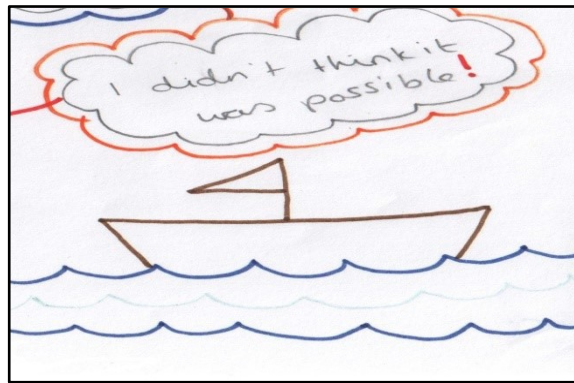
Due to the length of her narrative, this critical moment is divided into two sections. One section is a reflective account of her learning in which she thinks back to her earlier feelings of being on the Foundation degree. The memory of this first day has remained with her and she considers that she never thought progressing onto the Bachelor degree would be a reality. As a piece of reflection, the interesting comment is it was '*as bad as I thought it was*' as she can recognise her own academic and personal development. She looks forward at this point as she feels it is going to get better as she has improved. The final comment '*I've come this far*' is a powerful indication of her internalised desire to continue.

In the mediation interview, I asked her to clarify what '*not that bad*' meant and she describes this as how, over time, she '*got used to it*' as she just kept on learning. The '*YIPPEE*' bubble has two roles here; one reflects her feeling of success after passing her first assignment and the other is a celebration of passing the Foundation degree. Therefore, for her, learning and adapting to the level in terms of academic skills enabled her to '*stay afloat*' and succeed; however, just '*staying afloat*' is not enough as she wants to achieve more and improve.

As the image below shows, beneath the bubble stating '*I didn't think it was possible*' are the boat and the wavy sea. Whilst Parveen tried hard not to drown, it suggests an underpinning and constant awareness of this as a reality. She said she put the boat there as that was where it could fit but it is interesting that it is at the bottom and in the corner as she moves onto Bachelor level study. Suggesting this is a fear she will take with her. In the mediation interview, when asked about this final bubble, she says the Foundation degree showed '*me I could do it and showed me I could be strong enough not to fall in the water and stay on the boat*'. As she enters, she says, '*I'm not drowning am I..... I am still in the boat...but there's still time to fall in the water*'.

The narrative above shows Parveen's ability to survive, but as well as being about wants to be successful, there is still a fear of failure present. However, as the narrative below suggests, she came to the end of the course with feelings of belief and using the pronouns 'I' and 'me' she creates a strong self-referential position in this process.

Staying Afloat



Transcribed Narrative

I did get the result I wanted so yippee I did my FDA so.. erm.. after that time there was lots of discussion about you know are you going to go on further are you going to shall we or shan't we and half way through it was like oh when this is over that's it I'm not doing any more.. you know.. and I've started this so I'll finish it ... so I feel like I'm doing the BA now and I'm not going to stop now until I've got what I want out of it which is to be a teacher or something similar and be a professional...

Commentary

The narrative and the image above articulate aspects of a future self. Although there was some initial hesitancy in self-belief, her narrative suggests the Foundation degree gave her the confidence to carry on to Bachelor level study and potentially to go further. Parveen indicates that being on the Foundation degree has given her access to higher-level study and, like Ayesha and Sue, this is a qualification that will enable them to transform from TA to teacher and to a new future self.

Theoretical Links

Technology of Power

There is a subtle thread of power that exists in what she may feel is the legitimacy of her motives for study. This power exists for woman with children who want to study for their own benefit. In this perspective, doing it for the children is seen as more 'normal' than doing it for personal and thus perceived selfish reasons.

Technologies of Self

The final part of her account shows Parveen as a self-determined student with a strong personal locus of control. Evident in the narrative above is her

critically reflective self as it detects the changes study has created within her. In this respect, she reflects aspects of Mezirow's consideration of transformative learning as evolving over time and it also shows her as academically buoyant within her study (Glogowska et al. 2007; Martin and Marsh, 2009; Sheard, 2009) and resilient in resisting the power exerted by her non-student life (Reay et al., 2009).

Image Summary

Parveen's image depicts a journey of intersecting subjectivities creating complexity within her study. Parveen's experiences reflect the importance of belonging and feeling the 'same'. She entered onto the Foundation degree assuming she would be different but she was surprised by her 'normality'. In this 'normality' she found allegiance and belonging within her group that enabled her to develop both academic and personal confidence, allowing her to envisage transition on to the Bachelor degree.

It is evident to see that her narrative is imbued with a fear of failure and whilst this can be counterproductive, Parveen uses it as a monitoring mechanism that controls aspects of her relationship to study. Her fear of failure is a coercive drive that leads her to complete and it drives her to work harder and keep 'afloat'. What her image and narrative show is the Foundation degree as a site for personal and academic change and the Bachelor degree as facilitating her desire for a transformed self. Emerging from her narrative is her strong conviction of a new and different version of self.

6.2.3 Sue's Story: 'I suppose I never felt very academic at school'

Background

Sue is the first person from her family to go to university and she states that she is from an ordinary working class background that saw school as important, but no one really expected much from her. Sue left school with qualifications reflecting the vocational route her education had taken. She gained an O level in Art and two further NVQ level 2 and 3 qualifications in Hairdressing. This led to her first career as a hairdresser when, after a significant gap in which she had a son in 2001, she decided to return to college in 2007 to gain a childcare level 2 qualification in Children's Care, Learning and Development. This was followed by her level 3 in the same course, which she achieved the following year in the host institution's FE department.

In 2008, she was a family support worker and eventually a teaching assistant. She has undertaken courses in First Aid, Manual Handling and Food Safety to increase her professionalism and her employability.

Entering onto the Foundation degree

In 2009 at the age of 30, Sue enrolled onto the Foundation Degree Professional Studies in Learning and it was clear that her career plan always featured teaching and working with children with needs. Her stated motivation upon entry was to use her Bachelor degree to access a

Postgraduate Certificate of Education to enable her to work with children age 4 -11 and with children with needs.

It is fair to say that Sue struggled at the beginning of her studies as she found the level of work difficult to adjust to and experienced low self-esteem and poor academic confidence. Whilst difficult for her, she developed slowly on the course making good progress. At the beginning of her second year, she was encouraged by a member of the lecturing team to undergo a learning needs assessment. She says this member of staff had noted that Sue was verbally capable in seminars and lecture discussions, but this strength of knowledge and ability was not reflected in her written work. In 2011, she had a learning needs assessment and a non-specific learning difficulty manifesting itself as having dyslexic traits was identified. This meant she had problems processing information at speed and as support, she was awarded additional help in the drafting phase of her written academic work. She also started to receive help from the learning support department supporting time management. This intervention saw her work begin to improve as she ended the Foundation degree with an overall grade profile of 51%. The greatest influence of this intervention was experienced in the final year of her degree where she achieved 59% and 63% for her first two modules. It was at this time that she began to see that it was possible to achieve her degree but she was aware she did not have the O levels needed to allow her into teaching.

Non-Student Identity

Sue is a mother and has a long-term partner and, like many of the women on her course, she worked and studied trying to create a balance between these areas of her life. Sue's journey was made more problematic as her son is on the Autistic Spectrum and has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Life for Sue was based around her son's needs and ensuring his home life was stable, organised and highly structured, therefore her study had to come second to his needs.

After Graduation


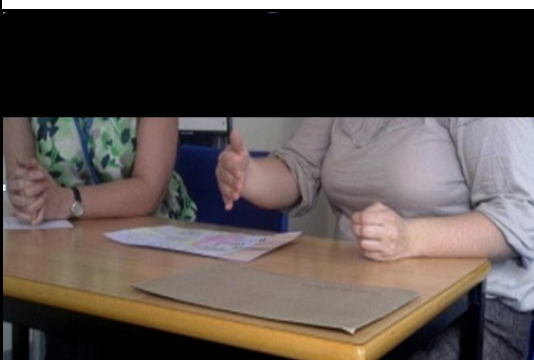
Sue was awarded a 2:1 Bachelor degree with Honours from the local and prestigious institution that accredits the host institution's degrees. She had to defer going into teaching as she needed to achieve her English, Maths, and Science GCSEs, which are a mandatory requirement of the Department for Education.

Sue's Image

Sue's narrative begins as a linear left to right reading of her image. She begins on the left with complex difficulties and ends on the right with a brighter and more determined self. She then returns to the image in the middle, reflecting on her transformation as she enters Bachelor level study. These three points become critical moments of her journey.



Critical Moment 1: Enormity of Study

IMAGE	VIDEO
	
	00:00:38

Transcribed Narrative

Ok so the image I've put in the middle is supposed to represent me at the start of the course and the right hand side is supposed to represent how I feel now. The big book represents the course I am actually doing erm.. and this side I've got a big pile of books that seems to get bigger and bigger as it goes up and it almost looks like it's going to fall on top of me and represents how I felt when I first had all the course work and assignments and just everything.

The big clock I've done represents the hours I was probably getting to sleep of a night and the stress erm .. there's a big cloud over my head my eyes used to get really tired so I've done square glasses because I was looking at the lap top all the time .. big droopy eyes as I was very tired and I've done like a faded punctuation which represents all the grammar and things at the beginning of the course as it had been so long since I was in education and it was all like a big blur to me and I didn't feel very academic at school

Commentary

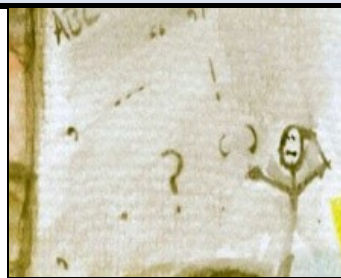
Sue shows her experience on the Foundation degree as a timeline read left to right, depicting this journey as a process of self-discovery in which she moves from the dark to the light. She begins her narrative with potent symbols of her difficulty at the beginning of her study. She explains a clock, books and the glasses as representing her difficulties in her study and the influence it had on her and her life. She discusses the cloud later in her narrative as something that even when she finished her Foundation degree remains, but that it is lighter. In the mediation interview, when asked about the images selected to begin her journey, she links this to her previous

level 3 qualification and the limited preparation it gave for this level and type of study. She states '*I didn't realise at that time that this was a progression and it mattered how you did you work in the FdA*'. When asked to clarify, she feels her level 3 qualification had not prepared her for the increased level of study as she felt it only provided her with '*very small observations*' and little '*formal*' writing.

Some features occur a few times in her image and piles of books are one of these as they become a potent image that represents the oppressive enormity of her study. This is seen in the tall tower of books that she describes as almost falling on her and the big book she has in front of her that she says was all the knowledge she needed to have to complete the Fd '*the big book represents the course*'. The video still above shows Sue's hand gesture to show the wall created by this pile of books.

The images she used to show her concern over punctuation and grammar represent her feelings of returning to education. To illustrate this in more detail, images of the cloud and punctuation are shown below, but the video still (also below) shows her physical response to this part of the discussion. She offers a self-regulating account in which she does not feel '*very academic*'. In the mediation interview, she was asked about this as she describes her education as a barrier. When she started the Foundation degree, she was not sure '*whether to push through*' or just stop.

A dark cloud, confusion over punctuation and her visible reaction to these issues



00:01.31

Theoretical Links

Technology of Power

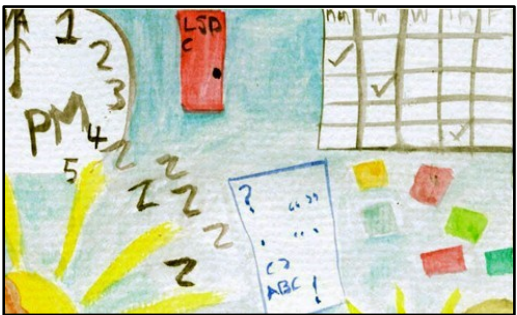
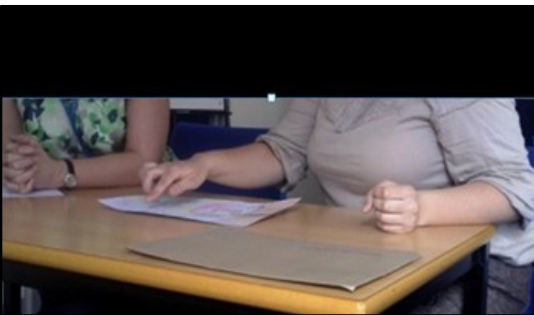
Sue's image shows the influence of biopower in her decision to return to study and within the mode in which she does this. As part-time, she inhabits the identity of a twilight student (Jamieson et al., 2009) who, as a woman, studies around her other responsibilities and domestic duties.

Time is a power that dominates her and just like Ayesha and Shabana, Sue experiences issues with time management (Maume et al., 2009; Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Brine and Waller, 2004). When she cannot control it as a technology of power and domination, it forces her to compromise and alter her life. The lack of time creates friction within study for some women with additional roles and responsibilities. However, the duality of this power is evident when she can master its influence, as it becomes a technology of self as she feels she can control and use it to achieve her desires and hopes.

In her claim of not feeling ‘academic’ there is a glimpse of her past educational experiences acting as a genealogy that influenced her as the learner she is now. It is also a known discourse within research on adult return to learn students, as their past can be a negative influence on their present academic identities (Fenge, 2011). This past creates a power-infused internalised discourse of deficit that has to be resisted in order for Sue to feel changed and transformed.

For Sue, the level 3 qualification she gained acts as a technology of power as it contributes to her perceived capital deficit by not providing the necessary academic skills and knowledge to facilitate her transition to higher-level study. Additionally, extant research sees this interface of level 3 to level 4 as problematic for some students like Sue, who are bewildered by an increase in learning expectations (Gordon et al. 2010: Winter and Dismore, 2010).

Critical Moment 2: Interventions and Changes

IMAGE	VIDEO
	 <p>00:01.04</p>
<p>Transcribed Narrative</p> <p><i>this side here represents getting more sleep so i've done a smaller clock</i></p>	

with an earlier time which I go to bed by erm the door I've put up high as I started the learning support centre so that's helped a lot now. I'm more organised with a timetable... post it notes because they are my heaven. I've put punctuation a bit more clearer and on a piece of paper because I feel more comfortable with what I'm doing.....

I've done my family here as we get more family time now I've learnt to separate a bit more so that I've got that timethen I've drawn that (points to image below of peers) to represent that I'm talking to other people in my group more as I used to be really paranoid of showing my work in case of plagiarism and things like that now I share that with other people erm realising that I haven't got to be so worried or be on my own as I used to look at other people and think oh they're really clever they can do all this and I don't know why I was here but this is where the sun is shining and it represents myself as a bit more happier and not so withdrawn

.....this smaller pile of books here represents that they are still thick books but they are still books to read but I've learned to narrow it down now it's not so overwhelming as I have realised now that I haven't got to read all those books. It's kind of like there's still reading to do but I can select it and narrow it down it's not such a big pile anymore in the kitchen that's so overwhelming




Commentary

The account above is one continuous narrative account, but it is divided into chunks to explore the constituent features of her perceived transformed development. In the mediation interview, when asked to review this point in more depth, she ascribes this change in her relationship to learning by her referral to the institution's learning support facilities that paid for her dyslexia assessment with an Educational Psychologist. She discloses that her assessment report confirmed dyslexia as a learning difficulty and that the learning plan offered to her '*really pushed me onwards with my confidence this year....the grammar the lay out the academic wording*'. She feels this small intervention influenced her ability to achieve and altered her relationship with study.

Within the image, the intervention offered by this institution's learning support department in the second year of her course is depicted as a red door. In the account above, she indicates the small yet powerful strategies employed that supported her work. In the mediation interview when asked about this support, she confirms she would have '*struggled*'. She states

that she tried to show this influence as the '*clearer*' punctuation, the brighter sky and happier familial relationships.

The right hand side of the picture shows her as a capable, self-managing learner who is more in control, happier, brighter and is a stronger, more able learner. The books that were a potent symbol of her lack of confidence are now more manageable in size and, as shown in the text above, she can '*narrow*' the books down by using her developing critical thinking skills. Thus, the size of this pile of books signifies her shifting relationship with academic skills and, as confirmed in the mediation interview, she reiterates her belief that these increased academic skills had given her the confidence to '*critique*' the work of others.

Academic Changes		Personal Changes
Beginning of the course 	End of the course 	

Theoretical Links


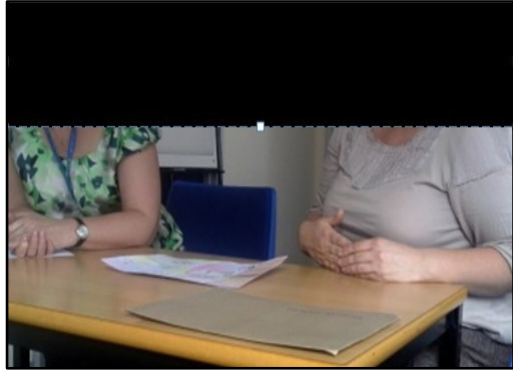
Technology of Self

In this narrative, Sue demonstrates her ability to control her study whilst balancing the multiple and intersecting roles that Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and McCall, (2005) would describe as matrices of power. In this account, her response to her difficulties are growth inducing rather than debilitating (Sheard, 2009; Sheard and Golby, 2007; Beasley et al., 2003).

Her academic control is signified by the size of the books, showing her development of new critical reading skills. This shift in her academic development shows her capable of a new learning perspective and, ultimately, higher forms of understanding (Mezirow, 1991). In this perceptual shift, she refashions herself as capable of exhibiting her new academic and personal capabilities (Biesta and Tedder, 2006). Sue's signification of books to show her feelings about academic study could present her as capital deficit in which her poor educational experiences, intersected by her classed background exclude her from knowing the academic codes necessary for her university participation (Bowl, 2003;

Archer, 2007; Bamber and Tett, 2001). However, as Sue shows, this should be contextualised within timescales that create periods of adaptation. As Reay et al. (2009) acknowledge, non-traditional students can experience such a successful adaptation to HE study and Sue makes hers visible in the person on the right side of the paper, when shown against the one on the left.

The learning support Sue receives may mean that she cannot claim to be the epitome of a traditional independent learner (Leathwood, 2006) but she emerges as self-determined in this process and empowered by the strategies she is utilising in her study. This support challenges her perception of her lack of ability and it enables her to move forwards and to change. She is able to resist her past and move towards a brighter future. This help becomes a technology of self as this is what made her transformation possible.

Critical Moment 3: Transformation	
IMAGE	VIDEO
	 00:04:51
<p>Transcribed Narrative</p> <p><i>The sun represents the feel that I can actually see the future and erm it actually looks brighter the whole thing the whole course so I can see where I am going with it confidence and believing in myself ...I think it's a lot to do with the course and a lot of it is to do with erm .. me doing it for myself actually realising I've been given what I need to do and I've just found the confidence to just take that away and do something with it.</i></p> <p><i>I feel strong enough now to go on to the BA because I found that when I signed up for the Fd I didn't think I could do it erm... I thought if I get through this then I'd still not have any thought or feeling about going any</i></p>	

further it was just a closed door. The Fd was a big hazard in the way and now I feel confident .. to go on to the BA and I found that I haven't really thought about it too much either I haven't really doubted myself going onto the BA where it was a really big thing when.. when I went onto the foundation degree .. it took over my life thinking about it doing it so.... I do feel it's just comfortable and now I'm just chugging along... I would like to go further after the BA I don't know why I feel like that but I do....

there's a lot more that I felt could go in to the image but .. it tried to narrow it down as much as I could to the main bits but there's so much it's like a picture couldn't represent the journey that I've been on I feel it's been such a strong journey that I've been on that pictures and words could not describe it

Commentary

At the beginning of her image interview, Sue states that she is moving from the dark to the light and in the narrative above, she describes her future as being 'brighter' because of her increased confidence and academic ability. In the dialogue above, part of this confidence has been created by her usage of the learning support opportunities offered by the institution, because of her identified learning needs and difficulties. In Critical moment 2, she signifies this experience as a red door and in the dialogue above she returns to this metaphor of her difficulties as being a door-like barrier that seemed to be closed when she thought of progression. She now feels the door is no longer closed or the '*big hazard*' she thought it was and she feels confident to achieve. Evident in the narrative above, is the emotional toll taken on her as she described it as taking '*over my whole life*' but now, as is clear by her lack of doubt and her desire to go beyond her Bachelor degree, she seems to have overcome her concerns.

The image of her as a learner presented as the central image has two distinct identities, one that is dark and looks despondent, and the other that seems brighter and more content. The interesting aspect of the image is the lack of change in the size, shape or colour of the book she holds. This book is '*represented the course*' and is the one thing in this image that remains constant whilst she changed to meet its demands.

The final section of text reflects on her learning journey and it is clear that she feels it has been impossible to represent the journey fully as '*words and pictures could not describe it*'. Her words in the mediation interview sum up her feelings of passing the Foundation degree; '*now that I've graduated it was a big thing and now I'm so proud I done it*' and this sense

of achievement is visible in the image that appears on the right. When asked how her progression on to the Bachelor degree could be depicted, she stated;

'I'd take this image on this side and stretch it across the page a lot more. I'd have it slightly lighter and not as dark It is because there was never anything I saw myself doing erm in the past ... I suppose I never felt very academic at school I know I could achieve more'.

Theoretical Links

Technology of Power

Her narrative offers a glimpse of the genealogy of her academic existence as she discloses how her past educational experiences influenced her as a present student. In this account, the Foundation degree acts as a powerful opportunity structure that allows her to have a second chance at learning. This concept is known within research on women as Foundation degree learners in which study makes up for past negative experiences.

The blurring of the two forms of power relations exists at this intersection of past and present educational experiences. One in which she has progressed through school with an undiagnosed learning difficulty that delayed her learning. As a form of technology of power and domination, this sees her as funnelled into a specific form of non-academic participation and the other as a technology of self that, as an empowerment mechanism, means the Foundation degree has given her another chance and she will *'do something with it'*.

Technology of Self

The narrative above is full of a strong and powerful empowerment discourse in which she believes in herself, has confidence in herself and is now doing it for herself. This empowerment narrative is representative of research on women who have experienced learning gaps and punctuations (Baxter and Britton, 2001; Biesta and Tedder, 2006). Therefore, in Sue's account, the Foundation degree emerges as a technology of self in its own right and not just a product of a transformed state; it is the transformative agent. It enables her to develop a strong and enduring academic identity as she moves onto the Bachelor degree, suggesting that her transformation is secure (Mezirow, 1997). Her image is her portrayal of resistance to power.

The most significant symbol of her transformation is the central image (as shown above) as this two-sided person, which reinforces the duality of her learning journey. Above she reflects on the hazard or risk that the Foundation degree brought to her life, but it also created a person who sees a new and re-imagined self. This is something that Giddens (1991) suggests is normative within change states, that risk is a natural part of a process of change. What is evident is that Sue experiences an individualising of power (Beck, 1992) but as biopower, it is a productive influence as policies such as widening participation create opportunity structures that allow her to take risks. However, Sue is able to resist a dominant failure discourse which could liberate her from negative past educational experiences and in this way, see herself as attaining a new way of being (Macleod and Durrheim, 2002). For Sue, this image reflects a positive and self-determining woman.

Image Summary

Sue's image shows the duality of power as biopower on her participation as it created a learner who was marginalised by her additional learning needs and by an overt focus on a specific vocational pathway, but also provided an opportunity for a second chance at learning. Her image displays the duality of this in the dark and oppressive side on her image as it opens up to brighter possibilities. The acknowledgement of her learning difference was the catalyst she needed for her academic and personal change and this became an enabling technology of self as it instigated a positive and productive process of learning. Achieving the Foundation degree and progressing onto Bachelor level study provides her with an opportunity to be a new learner and to forge a new academic identity.

Like five of the women in this study, she experiences tensions between her study and domestic life, which intersect and problematise her time. That she is able to manage this is a *technology of self*, as being able to control time means she has more control over her life. For Sue, this means making time for her family, work and study, but not necessarily for herself. Sue's image shows the Foundation degree as a site of personal liberation from a past that defined and confined her educational experiences, but also to a new and imagined future.

6.2.4 Ayesha's Story: 'I passed. I felt like a flower that I had blossomed and that's my story'

Background

Ayesha described herself as coming from a traditional working class and Bangladeshi family background. She felt she was encouraged to do well at school and she left with a selection of qualifications, which she says included some GCSEs, but she was not sure what they were. After school and at the age of 17 she began a BTEC National Nursery Nursing in a local FE college, wanting to work as a Teaching Assistant with children under the age of five. She continued to work as a TA for fifteen years until she decided to enrol onto the Foundation degree, with the aspiration of being a fully qualified teacher.

Entering onto the Foundation degree

Entering onto the Foundation degree was a huge step after such a long break from study. She said her anxiety increased when she began her course in Professional Studies in Early Years in 2009 at the age of 35 and that she felt she was too old to do it. She expressed her desire to be a teacher and she knew that to do this, she had to access and pass the BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies degree before she could apply for a place on a PGCE to become an early years' teacher. Ayesha admits that she found studying difficult and she achieved slowly in the first year, having difficulty with one particular assignment. In her second year of study, which was the final year of her Bachelor degree, she achieved a year average of 54%. Whilst she made the transition onto Bachelor level study and was successful in her modules, she never achieved at the level she had hoped and submitted two modules, achieving marks of 52% and 54%.

Non-Student Identity

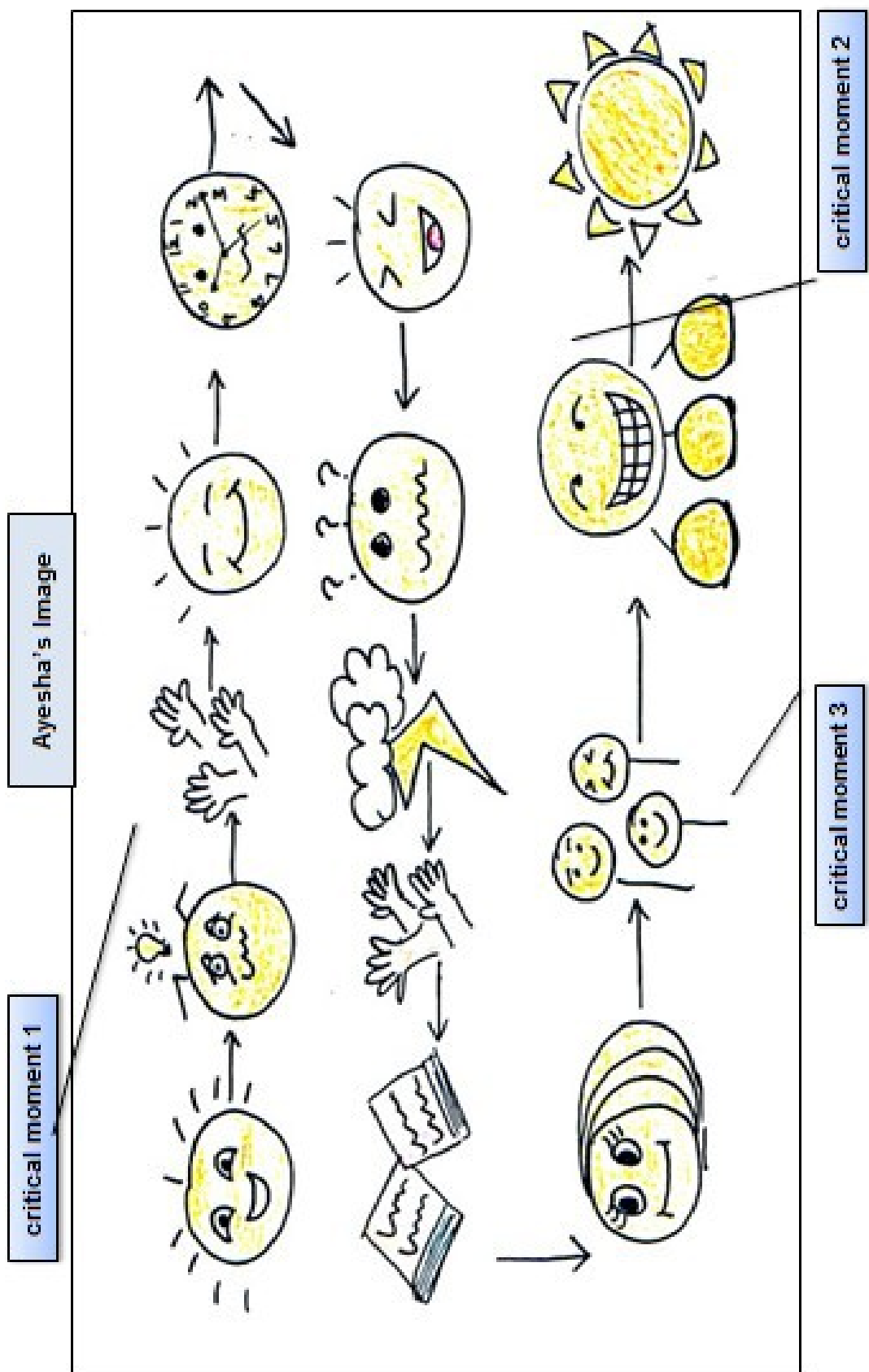
Ayesha describes herself as a mother and states she started the course with two children. Unlike some of the other women, she describes her husband and wider family as being supportive of her study, but study can still cause some conflict at home. This she says is when she is often asked to keep the weekends free but as she works, this is her only time to spend studying. Therefore, remaining on the course has meant that Ayesha has had to learn to negotiate family and study time.

After Graduation

Ayesha achieved a lower second-class degree, feeling relieved that she did not fail or receive a third class classification. I have been unable to contact Ayesha to confirm what she is doing and what she hopes to achieve for the future, now that she has completed her study. In our last discussion, she indicated she wanted to become a teacher.

Ayesha's Image

Ayesha has drawn two images for this research task. Her first image is a sequential account that has arrows to direct the viewer. Using faces as if they were emoticons, she tells of her experiences of being a return to learn student and after a 15-year gap, how she struggles to orientate herself back into study. The second image is of a flower that is blooming, which Ayesha states is how she sees herself while she is on the Bachelor degree.



Ayesha's Second Image



critical moment 4

Critical Moment 1: Competing Emotions

IMAGE	VIDEO
	

00:00:15

Transcribed Narrative

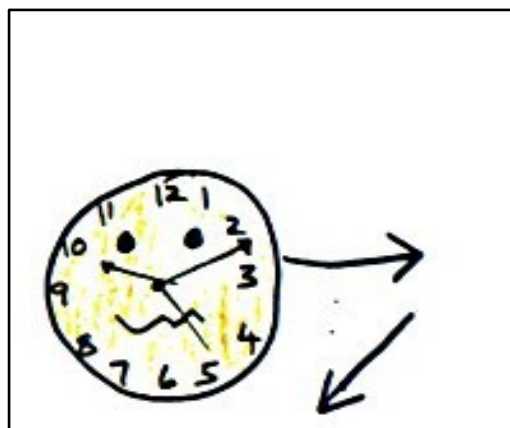
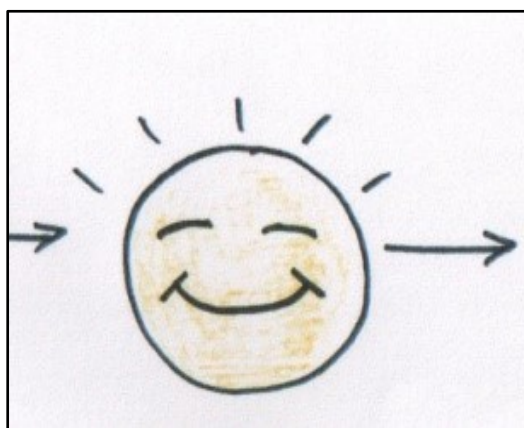
First of all I started off with a happy face er well when I first started the course after about a 15 year break of study coming back into uni erm .. I was just really excited and so happy about it so there's me being happy and smiling er the next stage is when I actually got the... assignments and handouts I looked at it and I thought what is this the Learning outcomes and everything just come together and I'm thinking how am I supposed to do all of that I was so confused thinking whether to actually carry on or not

Commentary

Ayesha completed two drawings, the first of which is a linear journey that, like a map, takes her from one experience to another. To enhance its linearity, each experience is signposted with directional arrows that indicate the flow of experience and the flow of her emotional response to this. The second image is a flower that shows she has blossomed at the end of her course. She begins this narrative with high hopes after a significant break in her study. In the video still, she points to the smiley face (image above) but juxtaposed with this is a confused face that shows a grimacing mouth. This face represents her feelings of being overwhelmed. As indicated in the narrative above, this happened when all the assignments were distributed at the same time, and after such a long break it was too much for her to process. This event made her consider leaving before the course had begun.

When asked about her beginning in the mediation interview, she stated that she hoped there would be a gentle beginning to the course and that she did not expect all the work to be distributed on the first day. The following narrative extends her concerns, but reveals the support mechanism she was able to draw on to enable her to continue. This provided not just support but confidence and reinforced her self-belief.

Intersecting Issues and Support



Transcribed Narrative

I had help from friends help from family help from my partner saying you know you can do it. Staying on gave me encouragement ... my confidence turned and I felt more confident and on the ball

I really want to do it and make a go of it and the next steps was the time issue...it was just like trying to fit everything in with your work your study your children and commitment to your family it's really hard to tackle these things around you and that took quite a long time to settle in ...and to put in the time actually for myself to study

Commentary

This narrative indicates dual feelings of being able to draw on support, but also of guilt as she tries to fit her study in around her children. The section of text above shows how she responds to the support of others and how she is fortunate to have this. The two images above show how these two issues influence her participation; one as negative as it constrained her ability and the other as positive, which allowed her to feel she could do it. This aspect of support and collaboration is a repeating motif in her account, as can be seen in the larger image above represented as hands and in the critical moment 3 below, as sets of three hands and people. It is fair to say that her peer and family support is a strong influence on her ability to participate on the Foundation degree.

Theoretical Links

Technology of Power

The overloading of information and paper work crushes her emergent confidence and, as a technology of power, it shows the institution's

response to Ayesha as a mature learner. This sees the institution's need to pass on the information as more significant than her ability to process this. This suggests a dominant approach to Ayesha, indicating negating her need for a slow and scaffolded approach that reduces the likelihood that she will 'drop out', or a consideration that she may need additional support structures to stop this from happening (Christie et al., 2008; Burke, 2005; Roberts, 2011; Sheeran et al., 2007). The immersion within the course data becomes a powerful and dominating process that undermines her ability.

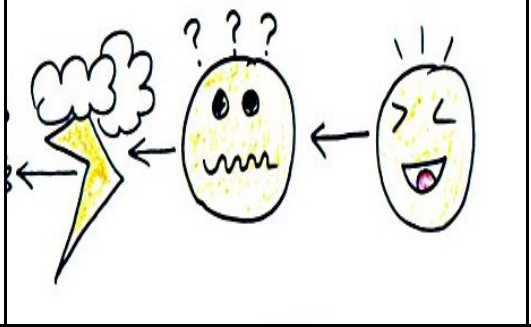

As seen in the image above, Ayesha, like Sue and Parveen, notes the importance of time within her relationship with study. Certainly, within research on women as students, time is an important concept (Colley, 2007; Wainwright and Marandet, 2010) but as the text in the commentary shows, this is also about her lack of sleep that emerges as a pernicious side effect of this form of study (Maume et al., 2009). Her narrative also elucidates this influence of time as it complicates her attempt to negotiate a path through being a part-time student, worker, and mother. Within gendered parallel fields (Walby et al. 2012), time is a fulcrum as all has to balance on this fragile abstract concept.

Therefore, very much like Sue's narratives above, this shows the biopower enacted by policy that encourages women learning across the lifespan (Moreland, 2004) and whilst it is productive of her ability to participate, her intersecting responsibilities and need to work problematise her study and create oppression. It is also evident that she experiences guilt that is formed as she transgresses and exists within the intersection of mother, worker, wife and student. Guilt for Ayesha is a psychic restraint that adds confusion to her study, but she is able to resist its constraining force, as it does not prevent her from continuing (Foucault, 1994).

Technology of Self

A strong thread in her account is the need and desire for support and collegiality. This collective belonging provides a collective account of resistance. Whereas Parveen needed it to feel she belonged, Ayesha needs it to provide a nurturing environment that facilitates her developing confidence. As she gains this support, a strong self-efficacy dialogue emerges that combats her feelings of doubt and enables her to transform academically, socially and personally (Burkitt, 2002).

Critical Moment 2: Hard work and Failure

IMAGE	VIDEO
	
	00: 01:19

Transcribed Narrative

and the next part is the first assignment as that was where all my anxiety built up you know thinking have I done it right or is it ok or how my marks are going to be like cos they were saying you know if you do get low marks you can upgrade it with your next assignment and I had all sorts of things going around in my head

the next part was when I got my assignment oh it was actually treacherous I had (cough) not got a reasonable grade (cough) it was below average and I just couldn't think why I got that after all that hard effort and work and then I had like friends and teachers backing me up saying it's because you've taken a long break after studying and coming back you know it was not just me getting the low grade some other people in the group as well and I just felt really confused like there was a storm over me something was shadowing me

Commentary

In her chronological retelling, the images above occur after her disclosed feelings of doubt and as the image shows, her fears of failure were confirmed by her not passing her first assignment. The image above shows her frustration as three separate images; the first as 'treacherous' since this is the word she uses to describe her feeling, her confusion indicated by the question marks and the image of lightning, which 'was a storm over me something was shadowing me'. However, she returns to her support network that became a feature of her participation, shown below as the set of three hands. In the dialogue above, she is soothed by the rationalisation her friends offer about the gap in her study that tries to counter her negative feelings.

In the mediation interview, she admits that she felt angry about this, as she did not know where she had '*gone wrong*'. However, it is clear that knowing that others felt the same and experienced the same concerns ameliorates some of the pain felt by this experience. Again, in the mediation interview she admits that she was motivated by her peers on the course, as they offered a supportive framework that she admits she needed at this point in her study. This is explored in more depth in the narrative below.

Supportive Family and Peer Network



Theoretical Links

Technology of Power

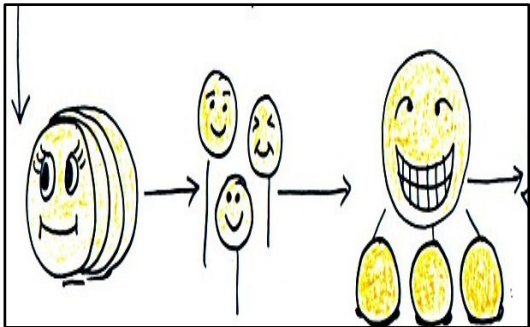

What this narrative offers is an example of a known phenomenon within women's transition onto higher-level study as women with limited academic backgrounds try to navigate the cultural norms and expectations of higher-level learning (Leese, 2010; Jackson, 2003; Greenwood et al., 2008; Morgan, 2013). For Ayesha, this is exacerbated by her non-linear learning career (Hewitt et al. 2010; Colley, 2003; Walby, 2007; Crossan et al., 2003) that shows itself as culture shock (Penketh and Goddard, 2008).

Her strong use of '*I*' and '*me*' indicates the personal locus of control, as she owns her failure and takes the blame for it. As a known discourse, blame exists for non-traditional learners within Bourdieu's accounts of capital ownership and deficit (Bowl, 2003; Greenbank, 2007; Thomas, 2002) and, as is argued, students lacking this capital may feel coerced to withdraw or work to 'remedy' this deficit (Bowl, 2003: 139; Haggis, 2006). As a technology of power/domination, academic language is an institutionalised regime that highlights and increases educational inequality (Skeggs, 1997); in so doing, it subjectifies the student by their lack of knowledge thus marking these students as outsiders and failures.

Technology of Self

Her friendship group and lecturers function as a supportive chorus that explain her experience. In this, they help her internalise a rationalised account that enables her to resist this particular set of difficulties. Responding in this way, she exhibits aspects of academic buoyancy in her ability to resist this discourse of failure (Martin and Marsh, 2009).

Critical Moment 3: Belonging and Allegiance

IMAGE	VIDEO
	 00:03:02

Transcribed Narrative

and then helping hands came and again family friends at work as well as partner they encouraged me again so what I did was this I took a proper route into studying went to the library asked my tutors for support and everything and then everything sort of moulded in I was getting much better at doing it and then making friends at uni ..here they are cos that was really useful cos we helped each other out and when anyone was depressed we used to go oh come on you can do it .. doesn't matter I've done it why should you be so down you can do it as well and we all sort of pulled together and we used to meet on a weekly basis going to the library and doing our studies and sometime meet up at the week end and come to the library and start studying and then like we all just shone and then my grades really improved and I thought I'd really shone throughout the year and they progressed really well.

Commentary

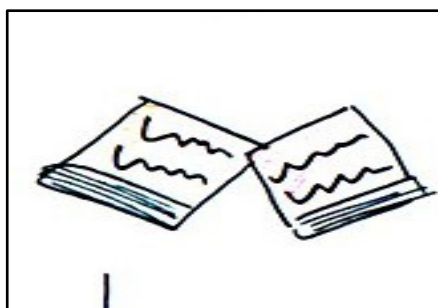
In the text above, Ayesha describes her response to the disappointment felt at failing her first assignment as taking a '*proper route into studying*'. By this, she explains that she took advice from lecturers and went to the library. For Ayesha, this process of seeking help from lecturers and attending the library are signifiers of effective study and later in the interview, these are added to by referencing protocols and using the

internet to find materials. For Ayesha, knowing these skills makes her a '*proper*' student doing '*proper*' study. Although at the beginning, like Parveen, Ayesha feels her lack of computer literacy was a potential barrier to her success.

The other strong feature of this narrative at this point in her journey is the reliance on this support network that has been a constant feature of her study. As the narrative above and as the image shows, she focuses on the importance of having '*friends*' and the camaraderie that they seem to share. When asked about the significance of the grouping of three to represent her friends, she says later in the interview '*It's just that's how they come in ...they said that you can't stop you have to make a go of it*'.

It is this sense of social agency, as they work together to scaffold and support each other this became a strong feature of her narrative account. This type of interdependent learning is acknowledged as supporting academic and social feelings of belonging and as enhancing retention (Tinto, 2005). This support seems to make the journey more bearable for Ayesha and for Parveen. Both women do not feel on their own as there are others who feel the same and are in the '*same boat*'. Ayesha's need for support is a form of social and academic belonging as she needs to be surrounded with like minded people on this journey but, as evidenced above, although this is a collective process of support and encouragement, she claims her personal ownership of this with the words '*I've done it*' making this a strong and individualised success story.

'Proper Route into Study'



Theoretical Links

Technology of Power

Power exists for Ayesha in the delicate balance she creates between her social existence as mother, employee and student, but this is a balance of resilience and risk (Beck, 1992). The risk is created by the gap in her study, which she feels she can navigate with '*proper*' study, but this in turn exposes her to increased risk (Brine and Waller, 2004) as it creates social hesitancy and exposes her to academic failure. However, as seen before in these narratives, there is a blurring within power that can lead to it being productive through resistance and for Ayesha, she chooses not to leave but to use support mechanisms to improve her academic capability.

Technology of Self

As noted above, when faced with a choice of remedy or leave, as identified by Bowl (2001), Ayesha decides on remedy. It is difficult seeing this decision as self-determining since there seems a limited choice as not remedying means failure. However, it is the determination she shows in making her *choice* suggesting that, whilst failure is a coercive force, it is also a motivating one driving her forward to alter her academic self.

In her study, Ayesha wants to change her academic identity by understanding what '*proper*' learning looks and feels like. It could be that she has only identified the performativity of learning, which she sees as going to the library. For Ayesha, these are the signifiers of academic learning and because she is a first generation student, she cannot draw on familial habitus or cultural capital to support her knowledge of what '*proper*' HE learning is (Hocking et al. 2007). Therefore, she is determined to draw on support mechanisms to improve her work. In this account, '*proper*' learning for Ayesha exists within the social situatedness of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), as something collective and ultimately protective, offering her a cocoon in which she can develop and grow personally and academically. However, despite the collective sense of achievement she expounds, there is a strong individualised narrative of success. It is all about her and '*my journey*'. In this, it is possible to see the Foundation degree as a site that offered her an integrative blending of relevance and meaning (Mezirow, 1997), essential if her experience it is to be effective and transformative.



Within existing constructs of the autonomous independent learner and the collective dependent learner (Leathwood, 2006), Ayesha exists in the

middle as someone who uses and relies on her peers as external support structures. This type of learning suggests an interdependence rather than independence (Leathwood, 2006) and this becomes significant as interdependence asks for the context to be considered, rather than accept the broad strokes that create the power-laden schism of independent /dependent (Brookfield, 1986).

What she does display are the dispositional traits of successful learners that are essential *technologies of self* as they lead to transformative learning and a new future self. Ayesha's 'academic buoyancy' and 'academic resilience' as dispositions identified by Martin and Marsh (2009: 353), are her ways of resisting the difficulties she has within study. Therefore, when Ayesha displays resilience, she is successfully managing the risk that underpins her participation. Research on working class women conceives of resilience as a learning disposition that helps them create and gain success (Crozier and Reay, 2011). Resilience is resistance and resistance is power.

That these supportive peer and family support networks are survival mechanisms is evident and research places these networks for minority ethnic women as essential as social and familial consequences of failure can be great (Archer and Hutchings, 2000; Bhopal, 2011; Hussein and Bagguley, 2007). Whilst for Ayesha it may be culturally orientated, it may also be a base or a site of resistance to failure. By actively seeking strong friendship or academic support groups, this strategy may reduce Ayesha's potential fragility as an individual learner (Burke et al., 2013), enabling her to see an identity emerge within this group belonging process (Byrne, 2003).

Critical Moment 4: Blossoming

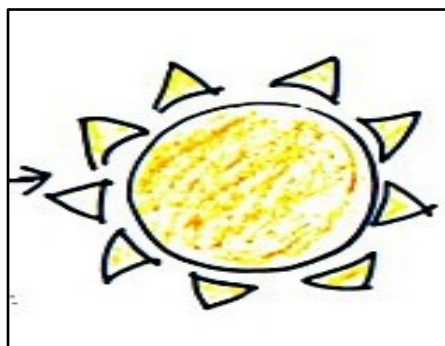
IMAGE	VIDEO
	

Transcribed Narrative

it was like a shining star ...and at the end I passed I felt like a flower that I had blossomed and that's my story andif someone else starts the FDA and thought of leaving I'd say give them a push and give them confidence and say that they can do it .. and it's really amazing when you look at your first assignment and you reflect back to what you've donethere's a lot of change.....

Well the sun is like the sun shining I thought I had a cloud before over me and I thought going through this has progressed me to shine out more and when I actually knew I actually passed the FDA I sort of blossomed I thought it's over I can move on to the next

'Like a shining star'



Commentary

This final narrative is very clear in its imagery and intention, because it explains her use of the sun image as '*a shining star*' and in the text and the video still, you can see her point to that part of her Foundation degree when she failed her first assignment. When reflecting back to this point in her experience, she shows incredulity and by using words like '*amazing*', she indicates the nature of her transformation. Ayesha was unusual in this task as she created two images; one that she describes as showing her experiences of being on the Foundation degree and the other as the outcome. As she says above, the flower shows her as someone who has '*blossomed*'. Her narrative above suggests that the Foundation degree was something she had to achieve to get to this new level of learning and, as such, it had to be endured. Using the phrase '*I can move onto the next*', she now sees her study as a linear progress rather than as something punctuated and dislocated by time.

In the larger flower image, when questioned about the movement marks around the image she said, '*I'm just showing how I blossomed at the end*' and when probed further to indicate what blossoming meant, she said,

'Well it was because I am on the BA'. When asked about the perceived benefits of being on the Foundation degree, she says that *'you know what you are talking about and you find out more about yourself'*. The Foundation degree for Ayesha has influenced her skills knowledge and her confidence and when asked about this in the mediation interview, she stated that after completing the Foundation degree she was *'more confident and I think I got more esteem'*. When asked how she felt as she entered Bachelor level study, she says she feels *'happy because I passed'* and in the mediation interview, she openly admits that gaining the Foundation degree was just one step towards gaining the Bachelor degree; it was a means to an end.

Theoretical Links

Technology of Self

The technology of self at this point is the Foundation degree as a stepping-stone onto the Bachelor degree. This step is fundamental in the creation of a new trajectory of self (Giddens, 1991) and is a well-known discourse within this type of research (Greenwood et al., 2008; Harvey, 2009; Ooms et al., 2012). Whilst it does not show the Foundation degree as a qualification of worth in its own right, she shows a sense of achievement when it is completed and she is able to progress. Whilst on the Foundation degree she shows her determination to continue against her many adversities, and her motivation to achieve is both personal and professional.

Her transformation from doubt to confidence is shown by her two images and it demonstrates the evolutionary process experienced (Sheridan et al., 2011). In many ways, it shows the importance of time within transition (Colley, 2007) and in the formation of a stable identity (Giddens, 1991) and, as her journey shows, her adaptation and survival has encouraged the development of a strong and resilient relationship to her study. Her words such as *'blossom'*, *'shine'*, *'amazing'*, and *'confidence'* offer a positive discourse of success and empowerment. As a *technology of self*, the Foundation degree has offered Ayesha opportunities for emancipation and liberation suggesting it is possible for her to become the person she wants to be if she completes and is successful on the Bachelor degree.

Image Summary

Ayesha's story reflects power as productive of her positive feelings of self-growth and empowerment, but also repressive in the power that causes her to fail part of her assignment. Ayesha's break from study and her claimed lack of study skills and academic knowledge emerge as capital deficit that governs her response to returning to study. What appears in her narrative is how this response shapes the creation and perceptions of her personal and academic self.

Her image indicates an emotional range of experiences as happiness, sadness, confusion and anger emerge but so does her sense of achievement as evident in the blossoming flower she drew to accompany the main narrative within her image. That she refers to her peers as supporting this achievement acting as a support group that offered her a comfort blanket suggests that for Ayesha, the Foundation degree as a location for collegiality created an interdependency within her learning that functioned as a support mechanism for transformation.

Like Shabana, Parveen and Sue, Ayesha exists within a complex interlacing of other roles and responsibilities that make her study problematic. What her narrative shows is her ability to offer resistance to the omnipresent fear of failure, which is intersected by the guilt she experienced. Her ability to study against this fear and guilt emerges through the positive dispositional discourse she offers. That Ayesha feels she is in control of her learning is a strong part of her narrative and that she feels she will achieve is evident.

6.2.5 Kate's Story: 'it's a road to success'

Background

Kate describes herself as white middle class and coming from a family that recognised the importance of receiving a good education. She left school aged 16 with four GCSEs and progressed to a local college to complete a BTEC Diploma in Media Studies. This pathway into further learning was specifically chosen to support her intended career aspiration to be a journalist. She completed and passed this course but without entering into journalism she realised this was not what she wanted to do. Therefore, after having worked for a few months in a local bar, she successfully applied for a position as a teaching assistant. This meant working in a local secondary school supporting children with a range of learning needs. It was at this point that she realised she wanted to create a new career working with children with learning deficits and needs.

Entering on to the Foundation Degree

When she entered the Foundation degree course, she said she wanted to expand her knowledge of working with children with autism and stated that her future aspiration was work as a Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator. Therefore, her motivation to begin the Foundation degree was partly based on her enjoyment of her new employment opportunity, but more on her desire to be a qualified special needs educator

Kate made the transition onto the Foundation degree slowly and found the first few modules challenging, mainly because although she had some experience of working with children, she lacked underpinning theoretical and subject knowledge. In the second year, she improved her grade profile significantly, achieving an overall mark of 57%. As she entered onto the Bachelor degree, she passed her first two modules achieving marks over 60% indicating her ability to achieve a 2:1 classification.

Non-Student Identity

Kate is unlike the other participants in the image-based interview sample, as she does not have the same range of intersecting subjectivities as the other women. Kate exists as a white, single and middle class student. In terms of her identity markers, she exists as daughter, sister and refers to herself as a 'single' young adult. She is much younger than the other women in the case, as she began her Foundation degree when she was 20. Her lack of maternal responsibility and her single status with no additional familial caring roles and concerns means that, as she states, she has the capacity to '*focus on her study and make it all about her.*' Even though she works full-time and studies part-time, she manages to organise her life around her studies. However, she did experience a life-changing event as whilst on the Foundation degree, she suffered a significant bereavement that made her think about leaving the course, but she decided to stay and focus her energy on achieving her degree.

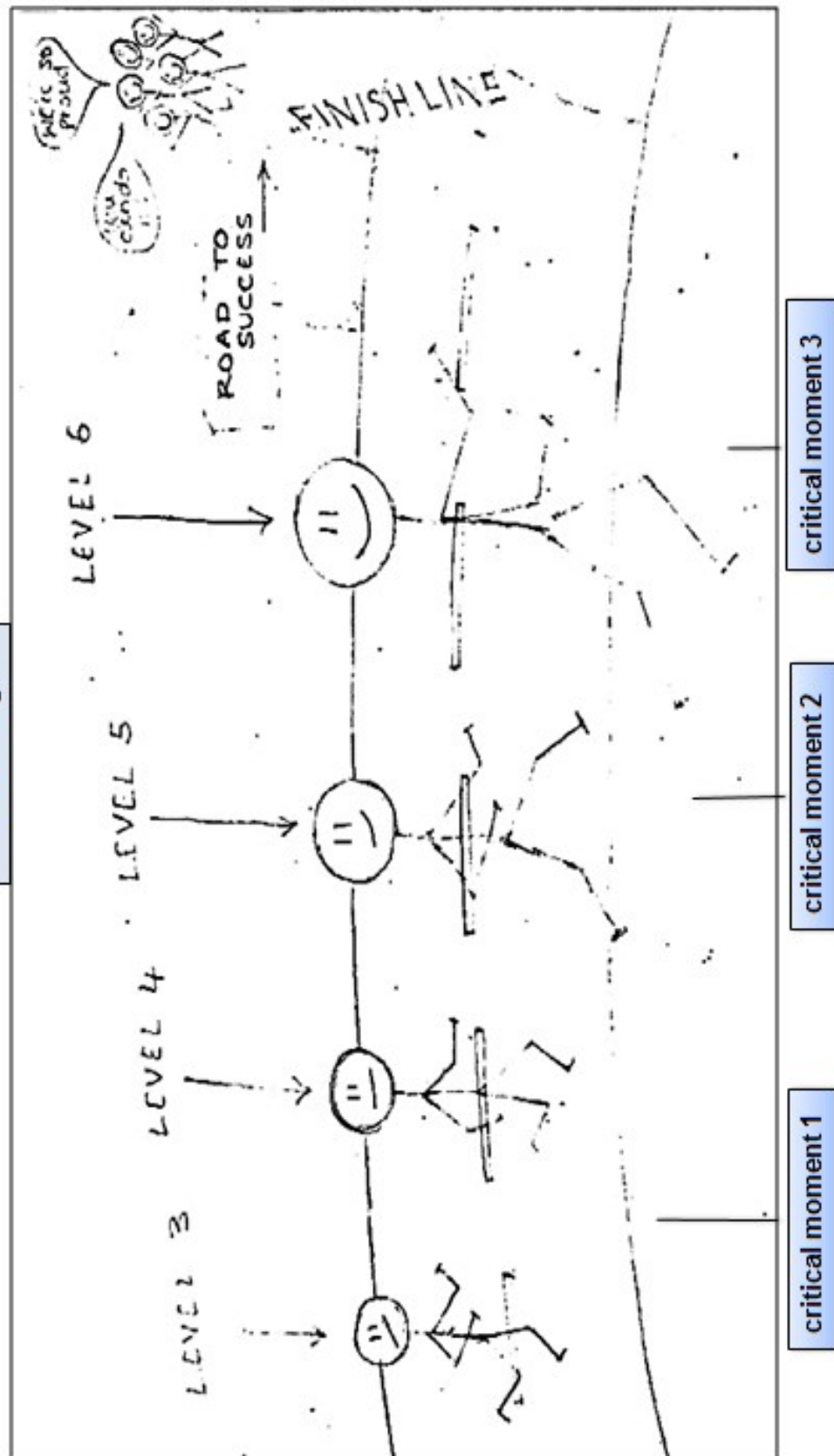
After Graduation

Kate was pleased with her degree classification as she achieved an upper second-class degree and recently informed me that she has gained a graduate certificate in Psychology from a prestigious red brick institution and is completing her diploma at the end of this year. She is planning to begin her Doctorate in Educational Psychology in September 2016.

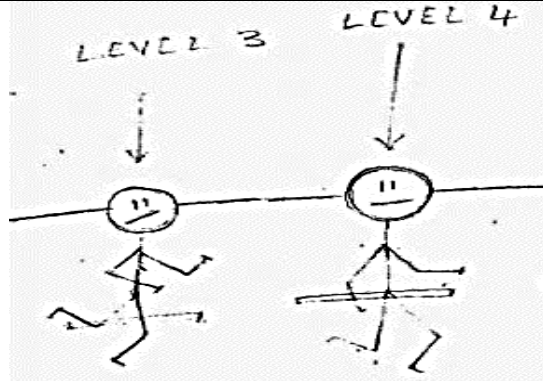

Kate's Image

Of all of the images produced, Kate's has few deviations and this is reflected in her narrative of a race that shows her competing with herself and against herself. Unlike the other images offered, Kate's image shows her friends and family at the end of the journey, which suggests her self-directed focus and motives for beginning study. She has three critical points that follow the flow of her account. The first is the beginning as she leaves her level 3 and moves onto the Foundation degree. The second is a brief step change at level 5, which indicates an increase in the academic level of the work and the final moment is as she completes her Bachelor degree. Her image is unusual because at the time she drew this image, she had only just begun her Bachelor level study and the image she created shows her completing this, almost as a foregone conclusion.

Kate's Image



Critical Moment 1: Beginning the Race

IMAGE	VIDEO
	

Transcribed Narrative

So it's a road erm a road to success erm because ..basically this is me and I'm getting bigger and bigger as I go through the levels and the faces as well are happier and people are cheering me on....I suppose I did it because that's what it feels like to me that's how I picture how it feels .. erm it feels like a long roadThis is kind of the finish line for the BA and the road to success is taking me higher up in my job and my career working with children

At this level,.....I was I was very unsure about how whether I would actually do it or finish it because it was all so new to me I've never done academic writing before or anything at such a high level this is why it was soyeah it was quite difficult to start with.....

I think here I was very, very young and didn't know what I wanted to do and I was very unsure throughout the whole of my media studies course and I think that how much I have changed from here to here because I know what I want to do now and I didn't know the exact job I want to do but I know I am going in the right direction with the courses I've been doing I find it really interesting

Commentary

Kate presents a linear image but one not narrated in a chronological order as she moves from one end of the image to the other, missing out the steps in between. The video stills above and below show how her fingers span the distance of her 'race'. Above, she is poised at the beginning and the one below she points to the end showing this as a linear movement. It

is at this point that she focuses on the people at the '*finish line*' who are '*cheering me on*'.

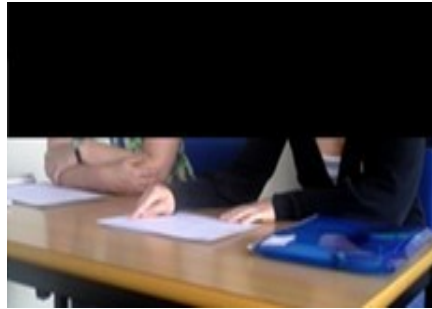
She begins her account with a description of her Foundation degree and progression on to the BA as a '*long road*', but this road has a very specific and clearly imagined end state. Although as her narrative unfolds she presents a couple of concerns, there is a strong feeling that she knows what she wants and she seems to know how to get it.

When she begins to dissect her journey in the following narratives, she starts at the interface of level 3 to level 4. Even though she has successfully completed a level 3 she states '*I've never done academic writing before*' and that the Foundation degree seemed to be at a '*high level*'.

This needs to be seen in the context of the next section of text that follows this, where she describes her level 3 learning experiences. In the mediation interview, she explained she wanted to be a journalist and had therefore taken a Media Studies Level 3 qualification. She locates this change within her lack of maturity and not knowing what she wanted to do with her life. However, after completing this and working in a school supporting children, she realised that this is what she wanted to do and this led her to the foundation degree. The image she has drawn provides runners who run from the left to the right to a finish line and in her narrative above she reflects on this and says *I know I am going in the right direction*'.

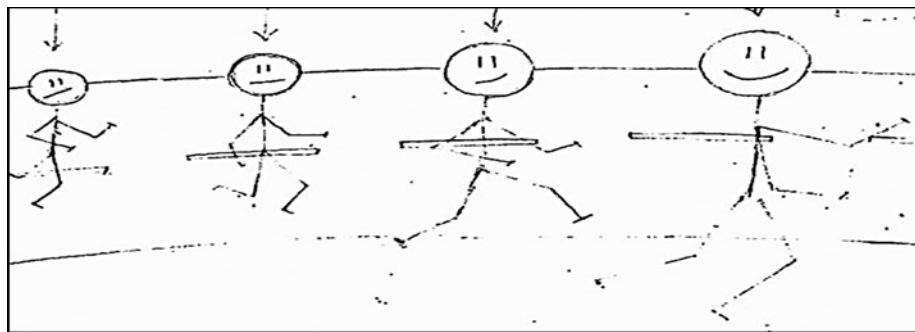
There is a noticeable difference in the size of the images drawn even at this early stage. In the account above, she says she is getting bigger and bigger, but in the mediation interview to clarify this, she relates the size of the figures to her level of confidence. There is also the expression in the figures' faces that illustrate the change in the person depicted in this race. The sad face at level 3 emerges into a big smile at level 6, but at this point in her course, she has just entered level 6 so she is predicting or imagining this success.

Jump to the end



0:01:47

Increasing in size and confidence



Theoretical Links

Technology of Power

Within this early career change, Kate was able to use the opportunity structures offered to her and alter her career pathway. However, this makes her initial study complex as she experiences a discursive change in subject knowledge because her media studies qualification is not compatible with the aspects of education and childcare. It could be argued that she experiences this interface within two forms of power within discursive regimes. Firstly, due to the lack of subject knowledge that complicates her ability to achieve and, secondly, within a lack of academic underpinning she claims existed within her vocational qualification because, like Sue, she questions the strength of her level 3 qualifications' academic framing to support her transition to HE study. This discourse is a feature of research on the 'detraditionalisation' of HE in which alternative qualifications opened up HE to alternative and new students, creating transitional difficulties upon access to higher-level study (Fenge, 2011: 377; Vickers and Bekhradnia, 2004). In this account, access to higher-level study becomes a powerful biopower as it directly influences the individual's

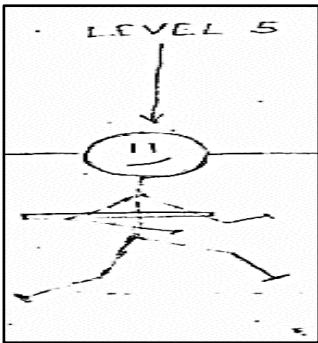
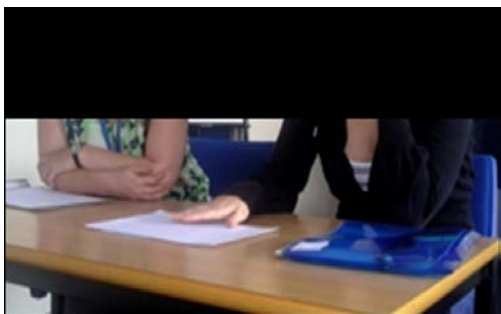
ability to adapt and adopt a new set of skills.

Technology of Self

However, as is evident in the image drawn, this is a temporary setback as when Kate draws her stick figures at different heights and shows their happy faces, she is indicating the Foundation degree as a site of transformation and personal fulfilment. What emerges in her narrative is the confluence of opportunity structures that led to her being in this race. Her level 3 course showed her horizon for action that led to a hoped-for career (Hodkinson et al., 1996). That she was able to change and adopt an alternative path, shows she is engaging in strategic life planning (Giddens, 1991). This change in her career choice led to different perceptions of her future and the Foundation degree as a technology of self was part of this process. As self-determined in the choices she was able to make, she was able to use the Foundation degree as a catalyst to create a new and reimagined self (O'Keefe and Tait, 2004; Osgood, 2009).

In the text, characteristics are exposed of an adaptable and purposive lifelong learner who is using education within a neo-liberal framing to alter her future self (Fraser, 2013). Biopower in this account becomes a productive force as it facilitates change that leads to a transformation of self. Additionally, her friends and family acts as technologies of self since they offer her externalised motivation that enables her to see the value of this journey, and to see how this is recognised as an achievement.

Critical Moment 2: Step Change

IMAGE	VIDEO
	 0:04:24
Transcribed Narrative <i>but when we go to level 5 erm .. I felt much more at ease I was like doing</i>	

better....

I suppose.. I suppose what I'm missing between here and here is actually erm .. what I could have shown on the picture is there is.. is that kind of feeling again that there was at level 4..because it's ..it's harder again .. it's like going going back to there in some way as you are going at a much higher level doing the BA.....

Commentary

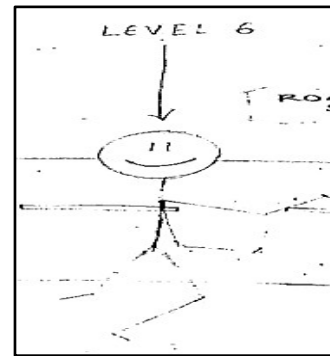
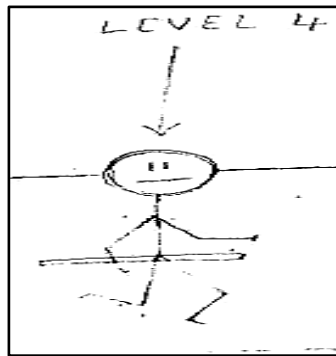
This is a very small section of text, but it is significant as it sees her changing her stride. In the mediation interview, she says it is to meet the increased demands of study. When asked to reflect further on this image, she indicates the level 5 felt like a '*bigger hurdle*' and that she wanted '*to show that with the wider legs*'. Although, she is aware it is increasing in difficulty, her narrative indicates the 'ease' she experienced in this process.

This image shows her at level 5 almost sprinting to progress onto level 6, but it also reflects how she feels when she enters level 6. As the narrative above shows, she uses the image to indicate her feelings when she entered on to Bachelor level study and she suggests this is a step up and something that needed to be navigated.

In the mediation interview, when asked about this image and her experiences of progression, she offers that she has mixed feelings as to the difficulty she experienced as;

'I feel as challenged as I did on the foundation degree with the assignments but when I'm sitting in the lectures I don't feel I am learning as much as I did when I was on the foundation degree'

Step Changes



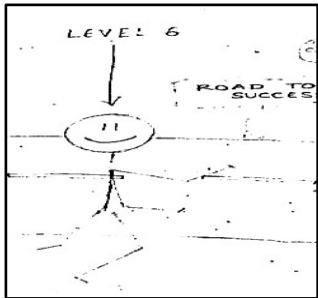
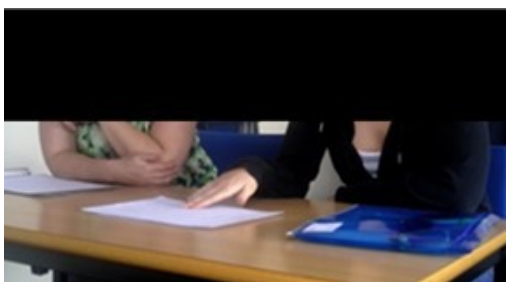
Theoretical Links

Technology of Self

This small section of text represents the midpoint of her learning, but also signposts her response to her transition onto this new level. What this reflects is the evolutionary aspect of this transitional process as she feels challenged at one level and then, after a period of adaptation, this challenge subsides. This shows her rising to the level of study required and navigating the perceived step change with ease (Penketh and Goddard, 2008).

In this account, the Foundation degree is the location for personal reflection and change and as such, acts a *technology of self* enabling her to know who she is as a learner. In this, she proves herself as able to clear these academic hurdles and progress through her learning. As Mezirow (1997, 2006) and Tennant (1998) claim, transformed learning has to be linked to an alteration of the self in the frames of reference used. Therefore, Kate is demonstrating this in the approach to her study. Her frame of reference is in the confidence she feels in her ability to progress and achieve the degree.

Critical Moment 3: Finish Line

IMAGE	VIDEO
	

Transcribed Narrative

I suppose the purpose of the Fd is that I needed it to get to this person and I really did enjoy the Fd as well you know as I suppose crossing that finish line to get the foundation degree was a really really great sense of achievement .. I mean there wasn't much time between the foundation degree and the BA I always intended to go on to do the BA erm ... I suppose was always knew it was going to be that quick from going to straight from the foundation degree to the BA erm .. so ..yeah I suppose if there had been time I would have reflected more on the what I might do in the future but I'm happy to just carry on...enjoy that but it was really great

So I think it's improved my confidence you can see it there definitely....but it's more to do with professional development than anythingI think ...well (inaudible) growing into a more I don't know ...I suppose socially I've become more adept when speaking to parents...things like that...and I guess that..that has helped the ..foundation degree

Commentary

Kate is the only woman who drew herself actually completing her Bachelor degree. This is shown above as the level 6 (Bachelor level) person crossing the line who exists because of the Foundation degree she studied. In the narrative above, it emerges that she conflates her image here, confusing the Foundation degree with crossing the line at the end of the degree. This supports her claim above that she '*always intended to go on to do the BA*' and it was the purpose of the Foundation degree to get her there.

In the first section of text, it is clear that she would have liked more time to reflect on her completion of the Foundation degree as she describes this as

a 'really really great sense of achievement'. This period of reflection may have enabled her to consider her success and her future in more depth, and enjoy the possibilities of both. The video still below shows her holding her hand in the air and making an emphatic gesture when she says the word 'achievement'. However, it is clear in this account that there was very little doubt that she would not progress. She states that entering onto the Bachelor degree was always her intention. In the mediation interview, she discusses this predicted point of completion and she feels that the Foundation degree gave her the 'drive to go on'. She concludes with the statement that going onto Bachelor level study is still being on the road to success.

For Kate, her development is specifically located as professional and in the narrative above, she alludes to her increased social and professional confidence, describing herself as more 'socially' developed and more able to speak to parents. Her participation on this pathway has enabled her to be a more confident professional.

The finish line does not seem to be the end of the journey, as for her the road continues and it goes 'probably off the page'. When asked about this she said 'Yeah I think I would actually go further than level 6 eventually go on to do a Masters'. Later in the same interview she confirms that 'I still want to be a SENCO erm...maybe hopefully get a Masters ..probably not straight after'.

Finish Line



'you can do it' and 'we're so proud'



00:05:05

Theoretical Links

Technology of Self

The text above demonstrated her use of the Foundation degree as a 'stepping stone' to higher level study and, as such, it becomes a technology of self, leading to career and professional change. It helps

produce a new version of who she is. The Foundation degree functioning as a stepping-stone to higher-level study exists as a known research discourse (Morris, 2010; Griffiths and Lloyd, 2008; Harvey, 2009). This is often presented as devaluing the qualification and within this discursive regime, Foundation degrees are perceived as credential amelioration for an underclass (Bowl, 2003). However, for Kate as a middle class student, access onto the Foundation degree widened her horizon of action and enabled her to choose a new career. Within a neo-liberal discourse of expanded education functioning as transformational structure, this form of biopower is therefore productive for Kate as she is able to capitalise on her choices and use them to advance herself. As a means of self-change and self-reorientation, this qualification is a technology of self as it offers positive and productive sites of power to flow through her participation.

What Kate's narrative offers is a glimpse into the behaviour of a self-determined student who has used all available opportunities to create a transformed way of being in the world and is able to imagine a future self (Pizzolato, 2007, cited in Clegg 2011: 94).

Image Summary

Kate's image and narrative are different from the others in that they offer an uncomplicated vision of part-time student participation that is linear and without indicators of great difficulty or distress. For Kate, power moves through her participation as linear and not folded within the complexity of intersections of life. As younger and without the same range of familial and domestic responsibilities or duties, her discursive fold is one that frames her as non-traditional by virtue of her age and not by her class or ethnicity. Although she is a part-time student, her horizons of action are very different to the other students in this study in that she is able to use biopower within discursive regimes as productive, because it opens up opportunities to change her life.

Kate experiences this process within a productive framing of power because she was able to capitalise on the support mechanisms that helped her achieve her desire for gaining her Bachelor degree. In this, accessing the Foundation degree was a site of personal transformation and liberation because it allowed her to have a new personal direction.

6.3 Maintaining Stable Learner Identities

The final part of this chapter draws together the longitudinal narratives created by the participants' self-descriptors originally selected in the questionnaire before the images were created. As explored in Chapter 5, participants selected three words that described how they felt as they began Bachelor level study. The five women who formed the heart of the case were asked at three research points to review and reconsider these words to see if transition had influenced their post-Foundation degree personal and academic identities. These points as shown in the table below are when they completed the questionnaire, the mediation interviews and at the end of the final focus group. This process was seen as generating identity talk, which is important in understanding the way these women, as learners, engaged with their learning (Crick and Goldspink, 2014).

What emerged from this self-describing process was the creation of relatively stable cognitive and dispositional states of being. This stability may be surprising if transition from Foundation degree to Bachelor level study is seen as an academic 'stepping up' (Penketh and Goddard, 2008: 316,) but not necessarily surprising given that this transition was internally experienced. This relative

stability suggests that by the end of the Foundation degree, these women had created an enduring identity, which was transferable on to Bachelor level study. The case interviews show this identity creation as relational, contextual and dependent on the participant's resistance to the difficulty. Kate's narrative differs from this as her increased determination grew from limited exposure to difficulty, which further indicates the relational and ambiguous nature of the power experienced when studying.

The words selected by these five women reflect the larger group narrative offered in Chapter 5 that exposed the participants' overwhelming belief that the Foundation degree had made them feel ***focused, empowered, and knowledgeable***.

Table 14: Self-Descriptors

	Sue	Parveen	Ayesha	Shabana	Kate
*Chosen end of FD - March 2012	knowledgeable focused empowered	happy secure focused	confident happy strong	knowledgeable resilient empowered	knowledgeable learner resilient
Review at mediation interview BA - October 2012	knowledgeable focused empowered	happy secure focused	confident happy strong	knowledgeable resilient empowered	knowledgeable learner resilient
Review final Focus Group 2 BA - April 2013	knowledgeable focused empowered	happy secure focused	confident happy strong	knowledgeable resilient empowered frustrated	knowledgeable learner determined

Table 14 shows which participant chose which words and signposts the two changes made. These changes were the word **frustrated** added by Shabana, while Kate added the word **determined** in exchange for the removal of the word **resilient**. These words are not unusual as they reflect dispositional and cognitive traits already identified by Sheard (2009), Sheard and Golby (2007) and Beasley et al. (2003) as defining characteristics of women's learning. The context that underpins the selection of these words should show how and why they remained so stable. Shabana, Sue and Kate selected the word **knowledgeable** and for Shabana, this word remains selected as she progresses from Foundation degree to Bachelor level study. She explains her reasons for this choice as;

*'Obviously **knowledgeable** because although I knew some of the theories and practice you need to know why things are carried out in the job that I do and why A has to be done and B has to be done..'*

This reason is similar to that offered by Sue who says;

'now I feel that I know why I'm doing it and now I've that knowledge to change or to suggest change because I feel more I know this..i just know what I'm doing now I understand it'

When Sue is asked if she wanted to change, she states that she does not as *'I am getting more **knowledgeable** as I'm on the BA'*, showing how the skills of gaining knowledge once in place, can be consolidated and reinforced and not impeded by transition. Kate also chose this word and she explained her choice by pointing to the image she made of herself at level 5 where she said; *I didn't feel very **knowledgeable** here but I do'* pointing to her image now she is on Bachelor level study. **Knowledge** is a constant theme in Kate's self-description

and she reinforces this with the word choice '**learner**' as she feels she is '*constantly learning and that is what the sizes of the people show*'. When asked one year later to reflect on her choice of words, she continued; '*I still feel like a **learner** and I think I will always feel like a **learner***'. Experiences of transition have not dulled this sense of wanting to learn.

The words **empowered**, **happy** and **focused** are selected by Parveen, Ayesha and Sue. The choice of **focused** for Sue may be linked to her learning disability which, once diagnosed, enabled her to learn with increased clarity.

*'it's going somewhere. '**Focused** erm **focused** because I feel able to do more I just know where I'm going and if even... if it's not one set thing I can **focus** on a few areas knowing that I know what journey I am going on'*

When Sue is asked if she wanted to change her words when on honours level study she added defiantly; '*I'm still **focused** and I'm **focused** to finish that's not changed*'. Similarly, Parveen offers an equally self-determined reason for this selection as she states '*I'm **focused** on completing my next degree*'.

For Shabana and Sue the word **empowered** is used to show their drive and motivation. For Shabana it becomes a signifier of her defiance;

*'I'm **empowered** in the sense that I'm going to do it ...bring it on whatever and it doesn't matter whatever*'.

Sue uses this word to show the intensity in her desire to achieve; '*I feel driven to do it and just **empowered** to do my best*'. Empowerment is seen as an outcome of higher education, as the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding

become a 'resource for life' (Fuller, 2001: 243). For Shabana and Sue, it is used to describe the personal power they feel in their learning. Like Deveau (1994), who states that self-knowledge is power and *feeling* empowered is important in understanding women's freedom, both women feel more in control of their learning and this feels like freedom to them.

Ayesha's choices were provided as a mini narrative of her journey reflecting the image she later produced;

*'When I started off I thought I was really **confident** and the... with all these downfalls I had I wasn't .. and then I actually grew .. **stronger** and stronger day by day and then I became **happy**'.*

Her words show resistance to discourses of difficulty and she records this as a personal transformation, later appearing in her image as a blossoming flower. Her word choices show her responding purposefully to the dynamics of her learning journey. That she was able to remain on the course and face her difficulties may be what made her feel stronger (Glogowska et al., 2007). When asked if she wanted to change her words at the end of the first year, she replied;

*No I'd say my **confidence** has grown throughout the course and also you just get **happy**'*

Parveen selected the words **happy**, **secure** and **focused**. The word **secure** is selected as she says; '*I'm doing ok*' and when asked if she would like to change these she stated;

*No they'd be the same I feel **happy** and the course I am doing well so far and I feel **secure** cos I'm doing ok and I am **focused** on the end so they've not changed really*

Both Ayesha and Parveen demonstrate levels of self-confidence that Baxter and Britten (2001) and Gordon et al. (2010) consider as created by higher-level learning. This becomes more so for working class and minority-ethnic adults (Bowl, 2003).

One unexpected aspect was the limited selection of the word **resilient** as this had been a strong discourse within the narratives of Sue, Shabana, Parveen and Ayesha. Shabana and Kate selected this word and for Shabana it is a constant part of her self-narrative;

***Resilient** because over my journey I've been.. I'm not saying it's been.. I know there's people going through harder situations but for me it was a lot to cope with'*

Shabana's choice is made on the high levels of difficulty she experienced on the Foundation degree and it is her stoic resistance that keeps her on the course. This link of dogged determination and resistance is for Reay et al. (2009), indicative of Shabana's working class background, which she is able to turn into an advantage here and use it to keep herself focused on achieving her dream. Although she felt empowered and ready for the next part of her learning, six months later, she added the word **frustrated** to show her home life continued to be a strong presence in her study.

Kate uses it as a transitory marker of self. It is used when she leaves the Foundation degree; *'I just didn't think I was going to get up from this'* but this changes as when she has been on Bachelor level study for six months, she alters this word in the mediation interview where she adds **'determined'**. She did

this because she felt able to '*go beyond*' and felt she had the '*drive*' to do this. The notion of resilience is important in understanding how women, as participants in higher education, can resist power in order to construct a future possible self (Clegg, 2011) and for Kate, changing from '**resilience**' to '**determined**' reflects an active, resolute and assertive learner; and one that wants to achieve.

That these words remained so stable may be related to the internal progression the students experienced. This internal transition meant these women did not have to renegotiate their understanding of institutional discourse as experienced by students who have cross or dual sector transition experiences (Morgan, 2013; Winter and Dismore, 2010). This stability may also be a response to the strong sense of community and collegiality that emanates from the narratives within the case interviews. As a social support network, this group structure seems to function as an external discursive scaffold, providing a space for personal and academic growth. However, the stability of these identities may be linked more specifically to Field's (2012: 10) claim in which the boundary crossing of Foundation degree to Bachelor level study acts as a liminal space, requiring the individual to 'stop experimenting with new identities and get to grips' with the identity position that corresponds to their position of Bachelor level student. As Fenge (2011) states, this process is about students making sense of themselves as learners within the discourse that shapes and defines them. This stability led to the creation of identities that enables them to study at a higher level and presents the participants as determined and active in their resistance and transformation. When viewed in this way, the identity talk these women produce

is a self-governing discourse as it described learners who can achieve but as it is externalised, it shapes and creates learners who can achieve (Crick and Goldspink, 2014). This indicates that the Foundation degree, when it provides such strong and stable identities, is a technology of self.

6.4 Chapter Summary

The individual accounts offered in this chapter provide insight into the micro-realities of studying for women as part-time students participating on a Foundation degree and progressing on to Bachelor level study. What emerged within this chapter was an understanding of the sites and uses of power, and using Foucauldian governmentality as a critical lens it was possible to see how power was resisted within their participation. As productive within technologies of self and repressive as forms of power, it either supported or hindered their ability to study and, ultimately, to perceive themselves as transformed, authentic and legitimate learners who belonged on Bachelor level study.

It was evident in the accounts offered that the Foundation degree had provided a site for self and academic development. It had facilitated the development of skills and attitudes to learning that enabled them to undertake transition on to Bachelor level study. This facilitated movement, manifested in the belief that transition onto this higher level of learning was not a step up. That they felt so positively about their learning experience was set against complex beginnings caused by prolonged learning gaps and feelings of academic culture shock.

The discourse trace that explored the self-descriptors and defined them as identity talk indicated the stability of these word choices that occurred at the end of the Foundation degree as they transitioned onto Bachelor level study. This was considered as participants feeling secure within the institution's discursive regimes and as a normalising process, as these women tried to make sense of themselves as learners.

The following chapter presents an analysis undertaken of the two focus groups that were conducted, one at the beginning of the participants' Bachelor level study and the other after they had been on the course for one year. It shows a collective account of their experiences and discloses the role of the institution as a tensioned discourse.

Chapter 7: ‘We wanted to get closer together to be able to talk’: Collective Accounts of Transition

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of two focus groups, undertaken one year apart, involving the same five women who drew the images for the image-based case interviews. Foucault’s concept of *governmentality* and the tools of *technology of self and power* are used to understand how forces act on the women’s participation. Using these tools, the women’s narratives indicated that the institution created a shift in their understanding of what it was to be a student progressing within the same institution. This institutional orientated change challenged the academic legitimacy and authenticity the women felt they had achieved after Foundation degree completion. However, the participants were able to resist this change in the learning environment but felt this institutional shift as a form of control of their learning identities. Therefore, it is possible to see in the accounts that follow that students still felt they were able to resist this institutional discourse. This chapter also explores the women’s response to the funding mechanism that became an important part of their ability to participate in HE and to transition onto Bachelor level study. Table 15 shows the findings from the focus groups set out under the headings that emerged from the analysis.

Table 15: Focus Group Findings

Focus Group Findings
<p>Institutional discursive regimes</p> <p>What emerged from the analysis was the role played by institutional discourse that either constrained or facilitated the women's participation. This is sub-divided into pertinent areas of consideration as follows:</p>
<p>Assessment and Feedback: Participants identify aspects of assessment change and the need for feedback, which is explored here as a need for confirmation of academic legitimacy.</p>
<p>Internal Progression: This exposes their reasons for progressing within the same institution. This illustrates the duality of power as funding and institutional familiarity becomes the loudest narratives offered</p>
<p>Physical/Environment Change: This is the most significant aspect as changes made to their learning environment alter their perceptions of their learning experience, as it shows the influence of institutional discursive regimes on their individual and group identities.</p>
<p>Transition as a site of Continued Transformation</p>
<p>Transformation: This section shows how students were able to resist any imposed changes and demonstrate forms of self-determining behaviour</p>

that enabled them to work within changes in institutional discourse. This resistance to difficulty facilitated the women's ability to imagine a new and transformed version of self.

The sections that follow explore each of these in more depth. To differentiate between the two focus groups, they are identified as FG1, which is colour coded blue and FG2, which is colour coded purple.

7.2 Institutional Discursive Regimes

Assessment and Feedback

Both Focus groups indicated concerns over assessment schedules and levels of feedback felt necessary to inform them of the level of working. The women offered the following:

FG1	
Shabana	<i>Hectic</i>
	<i>(group laughs)</i>
Parveen	<i>Well...well I've found it's ok cos there's only 2 assignments and maybe they are bigger assignments as that helped cos I always had too much to say about something...so that helped me with more words.. having to be able to put it (coughs) and its really helped that there's only 2...I really find that helpful</i>
	<i>(group talks at once)</i>
Parveen	<i>I prefer big and more time to do them</i>
Ayesha	<i>Sometimes we had 4</i>
Shabana	<i>Most we had was 3 wasn't it</i>
Sue	<i>Yeah.....I think it was 3</i>
Parveen	<i>You know not getting any feedback I really would like feedback before I hand in my assignmentcos this is like moving to another level...I want to know if I am on the right track to that level cos what if I am still working at level 4 or whatever it was before</i>

Sue	<i>But it's a level 6 assignment we're doing now so we've jumped straight in...yes we have</i>
Parveen	<i>I don't know if I've worked hard enough I mean the way the questions are ...it gets the next level out of you if it wasn't for the fact that you have to answer that bityou wouldn't have jumped that level... I don't know whether I have or not so...</i>
<i>(group talks over each other)</i>	
Shabana	<i>This week I would have loved to have feedback</i>
Kate	<i>Yeah</i>

As evidenced above, the women clearly indicate their initial fears and concerns upon entry, at this point showing a mixed response to these level changes.

When Parveen feels; '*well I've found its ok cos there's only 2 assignments*' and she lauds the reduced number of assessed pieces of work along with the increased word count '*cos I always had too much to say about something*'. For Parveen, the increased word count offers her an academic safety blanket, but this is complicated by the need to understand the academic 'levelness' of her work. Self-doubt as self-surveillance governs her ability, as she needs to know if she is on the '*right track*' and not working at her previous level. Sue feels that she has '*jumped straight in*' and, like Shabana, Parveen and Kate, would like early feedback to see if she has made the academic transition to this level.

Whilst this uncertainty is a known finding in research on transition (Winter and Dismore, 2010), specifically feedback exists as an external validation mechanism, confirming their authenticity or legitimacy on this level. It is a conformational structure on the participants' academic development. As identified by Crozier et al. (2008), Moore et al. (2013) and McQueen et al. (2009), carefully worded feedback is essential in promoting effective learning and

inculcating feelings of belonging, which, as the narrative above indicates, is important for these students at this transitional point. Institutional policy has a fixed time scale of 25 working days for formal feedback processes and this has remained the same since their Foundation degree, but the participants' need for feedback becomes more relevant because of the transition they have experienced. Ultimately, as a 'seriation' of power (Foucault, 1978: 152) the institution's assessment and feedback loop affects the rhythm of their learning and their ability to understand the demands made.

In the narrative taken from the second focus group (FG2), the influence of institutional discursive regimes pervades their academic identities. Sue discusses the inconsistency of her performance and this is something she internalises and personalises. Whilst this indicates her self-doubt and hesitancy, it also shows her as self-critical and evaluative; qualities needed to experience aspects of transformation within study (Merriam, 2001; Mezirow, 1997). Her self-criticism acts as self-governing surveillance, as she judges and monitors her participation but this is not a negative process, as she is able to resist this as doubt and rationalise this normative learning process.

The other women reflect similar accounts as they try to reach some form of negotiated understanding about the changes in assessment (Mezirow, 1997). Sue and Ayesha describe their participation as '*up and down*' and like a '*roller coaster*' and, as Christie et al. (2008) state, this is to be expected. In the narratives below, it is possible to see Parveen and Kate trying to find positive and productive elements within this change. Kate states; '*I couldn't do that now*

with the amount of er . . how much more information you need to put into these things' she indicates her awareness of increased levels of research needed at this level of study (Morgan, 2013). It is clear that the narratives suggest a pervading sense of difficulty. As findings from Bingham and O'Hara (2007), Yorke and Longden (2010) and Morgan (2013) indicate, students are able to meet increased assessment demands but it can take time. Data offered below here shows how they try to navigate this initial difference by seeking to resolve and rationalise the changes. Eventually, they agree that although differences in assessment are identified upon reflection and in comparison to their Foundation degree, these were perceived as beneficial to their learning and achievement and thus become productive discourse.

FG2	
Sue	<i>For me personally I had a panic at one stage and I had that panic before the end of the foundation degree and then I felt comfortable with it and my grades did improve you know erm . .and then I felt the BA was not too bad to start with and then after when I...forget how many semesters we have done now ...I think it was after the first I think it was the first (group talks) then the second semester.. I had a kind of meltdown again and I had a bit of a panic and then I think it was the last few weeks of this semester I kind of settled again I kinda feel it's a bit of a roller coaster</i>
Ayesha	<i>So you like go up and down up and down</i>
Parveen	<i>And it starts getting interesting as well when you find out the pros and cons of something</i>
Kate	<i>What I'm finding hard is thinking about the dissertation you've still got the exam to revise for there's just no time but it makes you think back to when we were doing the foundation stage where we did have 2 (group talks) different</i>
Sue	<i>We had loads we had at least 3</i>
	<i>(group talks over each other)</i>
Kate	<i>I couldn't do that now with the amount of er . . how much more</i>

information you need to put into these things

Parveen *So there's less in terms of how many but more in terms of content and more evaluation and more self.. so it's alright I suppose it sorts of balances itself out you've got less there and more here*

Although students identified differences in assessment in FG1, these changed to accounts that were more positive in FG2. When asked if they perceived an academic step-up between the two levels, they responded indicating a discourse of relative transitional ease and not the difficult step-up in level as identified by Penketh and Goddard (2008) and Morgan (2013). This extant research identifies a step-up within the perceived disjuncture of the vocational orientation of Foundation degree, against the Bachelor level 'top up' degree's increased theoretical and critical engagement. This gap or step is presented as the perceived vocational/academic divide often cited in this qualification context (Morgan, 2013; Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Tierney and Slack, 2005). Whilst climbing this *step* is often considered difficult, Bingham and O'Hara (2007: 317) found their students 'coped well with the variety of assessment' and developed a range of appropriate self-management strategies and this seems to be the case for these students here. This is evident in the dialogue below as they describe the transition as more like a stepping over from one qualification to the other, rather than an academic 'step-up'.

FG2

Parveen *I felt it was gradual I.. didn't I didn't see the step from BA. . onto the FDA to BA I saw the step into the foundation degree but I didn't see the step you know onto the BA you know when we were told well you now you're doing level 6 we are on level 6 aren't we now*

Ayesha *There wasn't anything too hard about transitioning onto the BA you just seem to move in*

Shabana	<i>Yeah I found the transition easier but like I say I have come across a few words and don't ask me which ones (laughs) cos I'm segmenting that word down I'm going to come up with something same type same you know it's the same but it isn't.</i>
Sue	<i>Er cos I was going to say I found the step during the foundation degree when we had that last semester where we moved up a stage and even though I did find it a step I did find a difference but I think that at the end of the foundation it made it so much easier when you did actually finish the foundation degree to the BA and for me that was my.. why I feel that it wasn't so much you know ..so much of a harsh step moving from the foundation degree to the BA..</i>

Parveen and Ayesha offer similar accounts of this experience. For Parveen, this is clear when she says; *'I didn't see the step from BA.....onto the FDA to BA'* and for Ayesha; *'There wasn't anything too hard about transitioning on to the BA you just seem to move in'* indicating a belief that there was a smooth transition from one qualification to the other. However, Shabana's use of *'but'* reflects what she perceives was a shift in the vocabulary used at this level (Moore et al., 2013; Thomas, 2002), but also demonstrates her determination to overcome this challenge. What the narratives above indicate is some agreement that moving onto the next level of study was just this, a moving forward rather than a dislocating step up and that it did not create a learning disjuncture that hindered their academic and personal identities (Reay, 2003).

Internal Progression

Wanting to explore aspects of the women's internal progression from Foundation degree to Bachelor level study was based on understanding the flow of power and resistance. Dual sector or other variant forms of progression presents

students' interface within progression and transition as extremely problematic (Bathmaker et al., 2008; Bathmaker and Thomas, 2009; Bingham and O'Hara, 2007; Leese, 2010, Morgan, 2013; Winter and Dismore, 2010). Within a Foucauldian context, this places power as existing in new and different forms of institutional discursive regimes. However, here students are progressing internally so it was an opportunity to see how power moved in this process.

The narratives that emerged presented two defined rationales for their internal progression. One is their guaranteed funding that, as explained in Chapter 1, means they do not pay for their course and the other is based on the continuation of established relationships. Up until this point in the research, funding has remained a muted discourse in their participation, but in this collective arena funding becomes an explicit reason to internally progress.

FG1	
Kate	<i>Because you didn't have to pay..that means a lot</i>
Parveen	<i>Funding is a big issue for us all</i>
Sue	<i>Yes it helps ...cos I couldn't do this</i>
Shabana	<i>And also because we did the Fd here I didn't want to go to a new institution and start all over again and build relationships over again</i>
<i>(Cross talk)</i>	
Ayesha	<i>Familiarity of the teachers.. yes that's important too..</i>
Shabana	<i>mmm.....(nods) Er and also it is the funding but ...as I wouldn't be able to fund my BA or be able to do it without it being free....</i>

Kate, Parveen, Sue and Shabana raised this as central to their participation and Shabana's statement; *'I wouldn't be able to fund my BA or be able to do it'* is very reflective of the importance of this policy as an access mechanism for them.

Whilst this may show the productive nature of education as biopower, it also presents them as captured with little or no choice. The funding they receive facilitates their type of participation but only in this institution, therefore, it may represent their only choice (Reay et al., 2002). Significantly, the women do not present this as a repressive constraint on their participation since they indicated they could not begin their study without this funding alignment.

As well as funding, relationships became an important consideration for internal progression. Shabana refers to relationships and Ayesha is more specific when she indicates that the familiarity of the lecturers in the institution is a positive reason. Social belonging and fitting in were important factors emerging from their personal narratives and again they seem to indicate that comfort is gained from being with students just like them (Reay, 2003; Reay et al., 2009). Certainly their concern about changes in the learning environment shows the importance of social allegiance and group contact. However, whilst they do not elaborate on the nature of what Ayesha calls '*familiarity of teachers*', it suggests that knowing what to expect was important to them, which is something more explicitly stated within their narratives in FG2.

This institutional familiarity appears in FG2 below through a change from funding, to the familiarity of institutional discursive regimes. These are offered as knowledge of the institution's academic processes and protocols (referencing, academic expectations shaped by institutional practice) (Hodkinson et al., 2007).

FG2	
Shabana	<i>I feel staying in the same institution really helps as well as I know some of the girls you know the ones who joined us last time they'd done the foundation degree elsewhere as they're finding it hard</i>
Kate	<i>As referencing can be different</i>
Shabana	<i>And also the quality of the work and the expectations</i>
	<i>(group talks)</i>
	<i>And the wording of the assignments</i>
Sue	<i>You get used to it</i>
Kate	<i>I was going to say I've got really used to it now</i>
Sue	<i>Yeah</i>
Kate	<i>Referencing and setting everything out when I first came it was like do I underline this but now I'm like a robot thing now I just do it</i>

This shift reflects that knowing how to do something and knowing the expectations of the institution, are important reasons to stay. These academic discursive regimes offer students power within this knowledge that supports their resistance against potential failure. For these students, the mastery of these skills reflects both repressive and productive forms of power as within this discourse, academic skills emerge as institutionalised power as the host institution is in control of the transmission of these skills. These academic protocols represent regimes of truth within the participants learning as they signify what it is to be academic. However, there is power for the participants because knowing these academic codes of participation means they can survive and resist failure. Survival as resistance to failure exists in being enculturated within specific forms of academic transmission (Foucault, 1978; Hodkinson et al., 2007).

The interesting aspect here is that academic referencing has been an important part of all of their submitted work whilst on the Foundation degree but at Bachelor level, it becomes a very specific and legitimising discourse. Kate provides evidence of this, presenting the mastery of referencing as a sense of achievement (Dixon et al., 2005; Morgan, 2013; Simm et al., 2006) and as evidence of her academic belonging. For Kate, referencing is a routinised behaviour that she applies within a specific learning culture, stating *'I've got really used to it'* and *'I'm like a robot thing now'*. However, as a specific discursive regime, these academic skills appear as a form of governmentality, since for the students, the ability to do this is normalising of their participation and gives them authenticity. Nevertheless, their comments reflect a level of cognitive belonging to the institution indicating an increased ease by progressing within the same institution.

Physical Change

This is the most important aspect of change experienced in their progression and this aspect is the one that threatens the stability of their developed academic identities. It is evident in narratives offered in FG1 and FG2 that changes to their learning environment) made their learning experiences problematic and, as such, it became the most stable and symbolic representation of their change of qualifications. As Foundation degree students, they were used to smaller group sizes, more interactive teaching and learning sessions within flat, non-tiered learning rooms, reflecting what Tinto (1993) refers to as collegiate and collaborative learning. Upon progression onto Bachelor level study, they found

themselves in a larger group and in a lecture room, which placed them in rows rather than the smaller table-based groups they had experienced on their Foundation degree. This change imposed an individualised learning process, shifting the participants' construction of learning from interdependent to independent, creating dissonance in their understanding of learning and learning culture. This shift altered their group dynamics, threatening the collegiate and collaborative learning styles that had been instrumental in the construction of strong learning identities. As an institutional discourse, this may be a normalising judgement attempting to align these ex Foundation degree students within normative higher-level learning experiences. As such, this becomes a regime of institutional discipline aiming to *train* these women to adopt a specific way of working (Foucault, 1978). It may also be a means of encouraging the transitional shift in their learning that takes them from the collective to the more individualised and independent student.

This physical change controlled their ability to talk and share ideas. Being able to talk and engage in meaningful and collaborative learning should be considered within the context of the participants existing as discursively subjectified as part-time learners. This is evident in Shabana's comment; '*it was more like a family group*' which suggests a level of belonging she perceived whilst on the Foundation degree that had yet to be achieved on the Bachelor degree. This is not because they do not consider themselves as authentic Bachelor degree students, but that their mode of attendance creates a specific way of learning need that is not acknowledged by the institution. Needing to maximise talk time when attending their course is linked to the paucity of time the women possess,

which can be seen as an influence of social intersections on study. Parveen's statement below suggests this when she says, '*we've got so much to juggle so much work*'. Therefore, changes to the learning environment are more relevant and personal to them as women and part-time learners.

These learning environment changes act as an institutional regulative discourse governing their participation and their learning within it (Bernstein, 1996).

However, the participants were able to resist this disorientation within their group identity and find a way to navigate and work within these new institutional structures and still see themselves as a coherent and identifiable group of students.

FG1	
Shabana	<i>I do now actually because it is a bigger group now as well you kind of get that before we were.. we had you were you did it was more like a family group wasn't it that we had...</i>
Parveen	<i>Has that helped though do you think it's better to have a bigger group or a smaller group as we were before</i>
Shabana	<i>What do you thinknow it's different though .. I think it's more...because we're also part-time we haven't got real time to go out and do group discussions I know the experience my sister had is totally different to me as she did hers full time and she spends</i>
Parveen	<i>And we've got so much to juggle so much work</i>
Shabana	<i>And also exactly as I was saying and also the way we are seated don't you think you can't discuss</i>
Sue	<i>You can't sit in groups</i>
Parveen	<i>They have said this several times this is not a good room to discuss and we need a different room</i>

Ayesha	<i>Exactly</i>
Kate	<i>There's too many of us ...</i>

One year later and the women are still concerned over changes to their learning environment and in FG2, there is a much sharper comparison made between the two qualifications. The individual narratives explored in chapter 6 indicated students' perceptions of the social learning experienced whilst on the Foundation degree presented as providing a support structure for emerging learner identities and providing a liminal space for academic and self-development. In the focus group, they perceive the Bachelor degree as the opposite of this and as Shabana states below, she equates the reduced interaction she experiences with institutionalised learning calling it '*old school style*'. Kate states she had to '*crank*' her head around to talk, reflecting an increased learning formality and level of physical and cognitive discomfort within this institutional change.

FG2	
Shabana	<i>Yes that's right it's been throughout</i>
Kate	<i>We had a lot more space as well ...on the Fd</i>
Shabana	<i>Yeah and we kinda interacted with one another because you like sitting ..it's like old school style you really don't interact</i>
Kate	<i>You have to crank your head round</i>
Shabana	<i>Yeah</i>
Parveen	<i>There's talking and your neck hurts you know (inaudible few words)</i>
Ayesha	<i>Yeah you don't want to move you want to stay</i>

Parveen *but then we had to because you are too far away there are these three levels one two three and rather than cos we wanted to get closer together to be able to talk if you're facing someone you make eye contact and conversation*

What is evident from both FGs is the power this change has in shaping their learning identity. The pedagogical approach used here, reduces the women's ability to talk within the learning environment, making it counterproductive to their learning development. It is evident that as social beings and actors within their own learning, it is frustrating for them that this imposed restriction to collaborative learning occurs. This is evident as Parveen states, '*we wanted to get closer together to be able to talk*', reflecting her desperation to engage collectively. Therefore, the symbolic dimension of this change becomes an important message about the changes within the type of qualification and the way learning should be (Griffiths and Lloyd, 2009). The development of strong learning relationships is noted by Bingham and O'Hara (2007) and Yorke and Longden (2010) as strengthening students' motivation and drive, also seen as one of the reasons for staying in the same institution. It is also evident in the case interviews offered in Chapter 6, that social relationships were a strong part of their survival process. They create a form of social resistance to failure. This seems particularly important for those part-time students with complex intersecting lives. As a form of *governmentality*, it shows control as surveillance exerted on their learning, but additionally it shows how these women resist this monitoring power.

7.3 Transformation

In both focus groups, there was an agreement that the Foundation degree had proved to be a strong foundation for their progression on to Bachelor level study (Morgan, 2013; Yorke and Longden, 2010). Both focus groups offer motivational discourse that makes the Foundation degree instrumental in their ability to imagine a changed and altered sense of self. In FG1, this is seen when students indicate that the Foundation degree was just the beginning for them. Shabana states that doing the Foundation degree meant she had not ‘*completed*’ and Parveen sees beyond the Foundation degree, the Bachelor degree and onto a potential PGCE. The narratives offered here indicate the possibility of seeing a new self; one either professionally via its influence on employment or personally transformed.

FG1	
Shabana	<i>(nods) you’ve not completed ...yeah... it’s like finishing off and</i>
Parveen	<i>You’ve been challenged...you’ve reached the end of your Fd but you can’t just stop cos there’s a bit more and when you get to the end of that there’s going to be a bit more.. (laughs) And there’s actually always going to be a little bit more but you can cope I feel like I can cope with the BA and then I feel that the next thing is the PGCEmaybe I won’t after that maybe I’ll stop and that will be enough for me...</i>
Sue	<i>Mmm yeah....</i>
Parveen	<i>It’s natural to want to do more</i>
Shabana	<i>mmmm....and doing it part-time as ..well it just helps like....I don’t know...just getting away from the school situation and coming here and reflecting on all that as well it helps you motivated I think if I was sitting at home I would have half the motivation...I wouldn’t be motivated</i>
Ayesha	<i>And I wouldn’t know half the things I know...</i>

Kate	<i>And it helps with your job</i>
Shabana	<i>Exactly</i>
Parveen	<i>Yeh....they really expect more responsibility...from me now and that's one of the downsides</i>
	<i>(group laughs)</i>
Ayesha	<i>You can apply all the skills and everything you've learned you can apply it to your work and be confident knowing that you know what you are talking about and may be they about because they haven't done what you've just doneyou ...in the end you not going to have a big head..</i>
Shabana	<i>But because you haven't got that BA you've just got the Fd and you've got current knowledge you are coming into college and getting it all You can't quite say to the teacher hang on a momentyou can't do it like that ...you know it doesn't...that's not rights (mumbles)</i>
Parveen	<i>It probably depends where you are cos where I am ...everybody's level 3 except for the managers..,</i>
Shabana	<i>Yes...that's it...that's what I</i>
Parveen	<i>I can.....I am a little bit more advanced at my work...maybe not more experienced cos you have to take into account that they have been there longer and you know give them the credit for being there longer knowing more than you..I mean actually putting it into practice...you are more knowledgeable in some areas...so..for me it's like having confidence to speak up now cos I know more now</i>
Shabana	<i>And it's also your expectations isn't it ...my expectations before I came and started the Fd it's like ...do the job girl.. but now you see yourself say if I want to do that then I need to progress onto that</i>

However, even though positive aspects predominate, Parveen and Shabana indicate that professional development can have its consequences as more is expected from them, as identified by Morris (2010) and Dunne et al. (2008).

When asked a similar question within FG2, the responses shifted again reflecting a positive account of their experiences using words similar to those selected in

the questionnaire. These provide dispositional accounts of cognitive, personal and empowered development and transformation.

FG2	
Shabana	<i>Knowledge</i>
Sue	<i>Growth</i>
Ayesha	<i>Achievement</i>
Shabana	<i>Both things as I didn't think I would be .. I'd last this long anyway as I did one module at the foundation degree as I'd be out.</i>
Kate	<i>Confidence you realise what you can do and what you can achieve</i>
Parveen	<i>Confidence as well as you thought you'd learn through your practice but now you know the theory behind it and now I can easily do my practice as I know the theory behind the and I can tell others about it so when everyone else gets stuck and they feel they're not doing it right I'll say it's well actually we've learned it and I'll throw some theory at them</i>
Ayesha	<i>I think it gave me a sense of achievement (inaudible) on the foundation degree the first semester was like what have I got myself into (laugh) and don't want to think about referencing or anything like that but as I've progressed on I was more able to do this</i>

Kate's comment, '*Confidence, you realise what you can do and what you can achieve*' reflects the group consensus, as it was clear that they considered the Foundation degree as positive and constructive in increasing their confidence, knowledge and self-belief in their achievement (Crossan et al., 2003; Dunne et al., 2008). Additionally, the narratives above show them as self-determined in this development of confidence as able to change. This form of self-reflexivity appears in Ayesha and Parveen's accounts of this experience, where they

indicate what they can do and how they can do this. All agree that the Foundation degree is a site of academic and personal transformation that offered them increased knowledge and feeling capable of studying and achieving at Bachelor level.

7.4 Chapter Summary

The two focus groups exposed a collective response to their participation on the Foundation degree and their internal progression. Both focus groups provided evidence of the Foundation degree serving as a site of personal and group development, with students indicating that they have moved smoothly onto Bachelor level study. That the Foundation degree had created a platform for this progression was acknowledged by all and for some, notably Sue, Kate and Parveen, the gaining of the Bachelor degree is not the end of their academic journey. Thus, the focus groups revealed that the Foundation degree had functioned as a technology of self because it had empowered students towards a new future.

It is possible to see dual forces of power within the transition the students experienced but the narratives still indicate that transition onto Bachelor level study was made possible by their participation on the Foundation degree. The following chapter is the discussion that draws the findings together and explores findings like this that suggest the Foundation degree support transition onto Bachelor level study.

Chapter 8: Identities Created by Power and Resistance

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Using the constructs of *technology of power* and *technology of the self* and *resistance* and *surveillance* as analytical tools, the findings showed how experiences gained on the Foundation degree shaped participants' identities, enabling them to feel able to progress onto Bachelor level study.

The findings are placed under two main headings that indicate how a Foucauldian account of power aids attempts to make sense of the experiences the women had and suggests how these can be considered as creating academic and personal identities. However, as Chapter 2 indicates, these headings are not used as a binary as power is relational, fluid, and contextual.

8.2 Technologies of Self

8.2.1 The Creation of Empowered, Transformed and Self-Determining Identities

The findings here indicate that for the women in this research, Foundation degrees can and do provide life-changing and empowering experiences that potentially lead to new futures, which as either employment or altered perceptions of self, increase levels of self-determination and offer an increased possibility of choice. It is important to remember that the individual nature of

these narratives makes it impossible to generalise, but there was core agreement on the Foundation degree acting as a site of personal and academic change. This was a strong individual discourse of personal and academic empowerment that was matched by the collective accounts offered within the focus groups. This sense of empowerment is linked to these women feeling they have choices and as such being on the Foundation degree for these women was an opportunity structure that offered the reward of potential empowerment. This claim becomes more pertinent when Alsop et al.'s (2005: 120) view of empowerment is adopted as within this definition, it is possible to see these women using the Foundation degree to make 'choices and transforming these into desired actions and outcomes'.

Empowerment is the word that the women in Chapter 6 use to describe the outcome of resisting the difficulties faced and in succeeding to access Bachelor level study. As a word, it conceptualised the women's ability to act otherwise of dominant discourse and feel they did not possess what Fairclough (1989: 244) states a 'sense of impotence'. Empowerment appeared in the images of dark turning into light, winning a race, and as a star shining. Whilst this places the Foundation degree as providing opportunities for this empowerment process, it also hints at the wider purpose of higher education as discussed by Bingham and O'Hara (2007) in connection with Foundation degrees and by Biesta and Tedder (2006) in a more generalised sense of higher education as an empowering process.

Whilst this research finding may be insufficient to dismiss criticisms of Foundation degrees as offered in Chapter 3 of being of limited worth and academic value, it seems apparent that for these women the Foundation degree they studied was more than, what Robinson (2012: 460) describes as 'second-best' qualifications and a form of policy rhetoric (Burke et al., 2009). Yet 'worth' for Foundation degrees is the role they have as access mechanisms in to HE and specifically as access to full Bachelor degree attainment. These women, as students entering higher-level learning with alternative vocational qualifications, needing to study part-time may not otherwise have been able to gain access to HE. Therefore, Foundation degrees as a successful manifestation of de-traditionalised access to degree level learning should not be overlooked (O'Doherty, 2006; Craig, 2009; HEFCE, 2007).

Access onto the Foundation degree for most was a difficult, or as Ayesha states, a 'treacherous' process but the women all remained on the course to complete the Foundation degree and transition on to Bachelor level study. What emerged from the questionnaire responses and was seen with increased clarity in the individual narratives, was the importance of motives and drives that had to be strong, realistic and relevant for them to endure the beginning of Foundation degree study and subsequent transition onto Bachelor level study. As a self-governing discourse, these motives were the internal dialogue with self that provided resistance to failure. These motives as rationales for the return to and continuation of learning, enabled these women to push themselves to study against the odds (Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Reay 2003). Being on the Foundation degree was a battle against the ever-encroaching difficulties from an

outside life and the ability to resist. Hints of a potential for these motives to be failure-inducing when the end goal was impossible to achieve emerged, but avoiding this failure was what drove them to ensure they met these goals (Ahl, 2008). Rabinow and Rose (2003: 3) explore Foucault's belief that 'desires lie at the very heart of our existence', but that these can also be a 'fulcrum of a more profound subjectification' indicates the importance of understanding that what drives women to study can be what increases the power they experience. Knowing these drives is one thing but feeling they are realistic and within the realms of possibility suggests that in Foucauldian terms, this is being authentic and thus, 'true to the self'. Motives when considered as such become a 'reflexive monitoring of self' (Giddens, 1991: 66). What appeared from this data was that motivation to study appears in the case interviews as self-surveillance that manages the women's conduct by promoting positive attitudes and learning behaviour (Foucault 1982; Burkitt, 2002). This self-surveillance encouraged them to learn academic skills and protocols because they did not want to fail.

Within an understanding of transformation, it is possible to conceive of these drives and motives as being the frames of reference that give meaning and relevance to study (Mezirow, 2000). Echoing the work of Glogowska et al. (2007), this places an individual's goals and personal motivation as crucial in determining the depth and stability of transformation, and the stability gained within their Foundation degree study may be why these motives remained relatively stable when they transitioned onto Bachelor level study.

The word 'relatively' is used to indicate the caution within a generalised account, as there was a subtle increase in self-orientated reasons based on self-improvement as the women progressed onto Bachelor level study. Motives based on enhanced professional development and employability were still prominent, but there was an increase in choices reflecting reasons based on personal fulfilment. Motivation for study, as linked to students' success, is known (Baxter and Britton, 2001; Fenge, 2011) and particularly the specific link between second chance narratives and women's participation (Reay, 2003; Bye et al., 2007). As governing discourse, motives presented in this study were a professional and personal legitimisation of a decision to return to study.

One dominant legitimating reason that emerged within all three chapters was that being on the Foundation degree began a process of identity-creation that introduced a distance from previous educational difficulty. This appeared with more clarity in the narrative accounts of *second chance* learning the women gave in Chapter 6, which show this as a complex renegotiation of a past relationship to learning to the one they are creating in current study. This is similar to Reay (2003) who found returning to study for women became an opportunity to eradicate memories of past difficulties and (re)write new biographies no longer based on failure and doubt. Certainly, this discourse is evident in Sue's narrative, as the success she gains at the end of her Foundation degree allows her to redress her difficult relationship with learning.

That women were able to claim a new relationship with learning emerged from the questionnaire responses when all the women stated the Foundation degree had equipped them with skills and confidence to progress, with the majority

selecting positive words to describe their post Foundational degree relationship to learning. This appears as strongly in the individual narratives, where it is evident that the women experienced an increased ability to manage the academic and emotional demands of higher-level study. Transformed learning appears within the narratives provided by the five women who offer critically self-evaluative, accounts of learning that sees them able to adapt and assimilate to learning experiences. Additionally, the ability to adapt becomes evident in Chapter 7 when feelings of '*belonging*' to the level of study are discussed linked to enhanced academic capability.

Mezirow's (1995) consideration of transformative learning as autonomous meaning-making is evident within the critically self-reflexive dialogue that shows increased levels of academic self-assurance. This is seen in the selection of self-descriptors in both Chapters 5 and 6 that were used to create identity talk, revealing changes in the strength of self-belief and academic efficacy. This change is most clearly seen in the developmental timeline within the narratives that indicate an initial post-level 3 'culture shock' experienced by some, to claims of academic and personal transformation as they cross the transitional divide.

8.2.2 Resilience as Resistance to power

As the narratives in Chapter 6 suggest, resistance to power became a necessary part of the women's participation. This resistance manifested itself within claims of adopting a resilient attitude to learning that meant challenging failure-inducing experiences, making resilience a psychic defence mechanism as explored by

Skeggs (1997). The individual accounts offered by Shabana, Sue, Parveen and Ayesha indicate that the word *resilience* was shorthand for their personal relationship with power, additionally revealed in words such as *stubborn* and *defiant*. The narratives the women offer are not those of women trapped within the impossibility of creating alternative ways of being, as Weir (2013: 36) states, a Foucauldian account of agency exists when the individual feels they have control and can be a 'participant in its own life'. From this Foucauldian perspective, resistance to power lies with these women challenging their subjective framing and in so doing, transgressing social norms (Sawicki, 1991). In this way, resilience is an internal discourse of resistance to discursive power and the creation of resistant identities (Weir, 2013) suggests these women became active participants in the creation of new and changed futures.

For the women in this study, challenging dominant subjectifying discourse involved a complex negotiation of this competing and conflicting power. This power is that formed through gendered, classed, aged and ethnically stratified subjective positions. However, rather than this discursive power making these women automata, as Foucault (1977:136) describes in *Discipline and Punish* in which the subject is a 'docile body' that can be 'subjected, used', these women challenge the disciplining effects of discursive power by engaging in attitudinal resistance to its influence on their study.

Accounts from these women indicate that studying on the Foundation degree exposed them to forms of biopower that created conflict and difficulty, but they developed resilient and hardy dispositions in order to be true to their motives and

achieve their goals. Therefore, resilience is resistance to externally and internally generated discourse that has the power to influence and shape their participation. As Shabana's narrative reveals in particular, resilience is what she uses as a tool to manage the difficulties she experienced and begin a process of personal and emotional adaptation. Therefore, it is possible to see resilience as an academic and emotional buoyancy aid (Martin and Marsh, 2009), the use of which formed a strong discursive thread in all of the narratives except that of Kate.

Kate did not claim a resilient identity in her narratives and this is explored below, but what seems evident is that for the other four women, resilience was an attitudinal attempt to subvert the challenges they faced. Both Reay et al. (2009) and Crozier et al. (2011: 145) identify resilience as one of a group of strong learning dispositions, namely perseverance and fortitude, which help working class students 'capture success'. Within a classed perspective, the four women who identified themselves as working class demonstrate what Reay et al. (2009:1115) state as 'superhuman levels of motivation, resilience, and determination' showing, as Crozier and Reay (2011: 145) acknowledge, 'success', 'fortitude' and 'resilience'. For four of the women, Foundation degree participation became a space in which they could attempt resisting many of the structural inequalities experienced within their life in the hope of creating a new future.

Findings from both collective and individual accounts emphasise the importance of group identity and collective support networks. These appear as sites of collective resistance. What emerges from both sets of narratives is that studying

on the Foundation degree offered a space for collective learning. This is based not just on the interdependent pedagogy they perceived within the formal teaching sessions that encouraged increased learning collaboration, but in the informal social groups they formed. Exposed most vocally by students who are minority-ethnic, it is possible to see this need for social allegiance and collaboration relate to Bhopal's (2010) research on Asian women's support mechanisms and resound with Beck's (1992) claims that women are pushed by circumstance or pulled by need into alliances, enabling them to resist social power of discourse.

What this suggests is that informal friendship groups were an essential part of their academic and social belonging, appearing not just as an extension of family grouping and kinship, but more like a joint learning enterprise. These groups provided social and academic communities of learning that enable the women to work, as Mezirow (1994: 226) describes, 'in concert with like-minded individuals'. Within Ayesha's account, it is possible to see groups as sites for collective discourse, encouraging active meaning-making as she tries to understand her social reality and the realities of others.

Social realities were evident within accounts of *belonging* as students sought specific identity markers to make them feel 'at home', not just on the course they were studying, but within the wider student cohort and institution. These markers were gender, age, types of employment and knowing others were mothers with children that made them feel 'normal'. Feeling 'normal' within these social groups

made study more manageable and, in Ayesha's narrative, these social groups were the 'helping hands' that enabled her to continue.

This discourse of social belonging and collegiality was a strong feature within the focus groups connected to aspects of pedagogic change within transition. What these accounts reveal is that being part of an academic and social group made emotional transition manageable and that knowing their peer group as they progressed internally was a stabilising factor. Interestingly, results from the questionnaires are similar to findings from Meeuwisse et al. (2009) as students did not suggest a strong allegiance to the institution in which they studied, but to the informal relationships with students that led to increased feelings of belonging.

8.2.3 Productive Institutional Discourse

The focus groups were forums in which participants disclosed social action and understanding. There was a shift from individual accounts of difficulty and resistance to collective discussion and shared meaning-making. One such shared experience was the acknowledgement of the institutional funding process as liberation from financial risk and concern. It was for all, liberation from a past life, offering the possibility of a new and transformed one. It meant the women could achieve their goals of gaining a full Bachelor degree without incurring the financial difficulties so many part-time students articulate (Callender and Wilkinson, 2012; Yorke and Longden, 2010). When asked about the benefits of internal progression, this funding mechanism was hailed as the most seductive.

In the second focus group, other benefits to internal progression were identified, such as *knowing* institutional discourse that created enhanced academic stability within the transition process. Knowing the discursive practices of referencing, academic writing and tutors' expectations as codes of participation created a sense of academic belonging, borne out of academic acclimatisation and enculturation. Within a Foucauldian account of discourse, these become recognition rules that create the norms of a certain context and signify the behaviour within it. As was made explicit in the questionnaire, all the women indicate that the Foundation degree they had studied had provided skills, knowledge and confidence to progress. Therefore, being on the Foundation degree gave the participants foundational knowledge of these codes of participation, which underpinned their belief in being able to progress. Whilst accounts were offered reflecting the remedy or leave narrative, as identified by Bowl (2003), what became clear is that for all of the women interviewed, knowing the institution's academic codes and protocols offered resistance to failure (Foucault, 1978). A similar finding emerges from Baxter and Britton (2001) and Haggis (2006), who found that students from non-traditional backgrounds are empowered by the development of the language of academia. For the women in the study, learning these academic codes became essential, since knowing these academic processes and codes became an essential part of the women's academic identity.

In terms of transitional discourse, the achievement of the Foundation degree became symbolic acknowledgement of the women's *right* to be on Bachelor level study (Tomlinson, 2008). The qualification is designed to function in this way

(QAA, 2005) and there is an acknowledgment that Foundation degrees can be perceived as stepping-stones to Bachelor degree completion (Little and Connor, 2005; Ooms et al., 2012; Tierney and Slack, 2005). However, it is more than an access mechanism for these women, as the narratives show it functions as a conformational structure on confirming their ability to progress. In this study, gaining the Foundation degree represented students' identity within constructs of *being* and *becoming*. They had been students participating on a Foundation degree and, as they graduated from this degree, they become legitimate Bachelor level students. Whilst speculative, this sense of feeling a student within a known progressional context has, may explain why some women chose not to attend the support sessions offered by the institution. There may be a perceived redundancy in attempting to *become* what they think they already *are*.

8.3 Technologies of Power

8.3.1 The Influence of Subjectivities on Study

The narratives in Chapter 6 indicate the influences of part-time study when conjoined within additional gendered subjectivities, such as motherhood and wider familial caring roles. These narratives indicate the challenge of studying whilst fulfilling these responsibilities and for Ayesha, Parveen and Shabana there was the wider issue of extended and international family care. Therefore, returning to study for some of the women in the study may be defined as epochal since this decision is made when there was the possibility of critical life events occurring. This appears in Shabana's account of post-natal depression and in

Parveen's account of looking after her extended family. However, there is caution in suggesting *all* women experience this range of difficulty, as Kate's account disputes this subjective generalisation.

What does become clear in the individual narratives is that returning to study may amplify the complexity of the women's lives (Fraser, 2013). Although, it is difficult to generalise, the narratives reveal a relationship between age, gender and the increase in social roles and responsibilities. When social subjectivities intersect such as motherhood, familial roles and domestic relationships, then highly individualised accounts were exposed in which there were different forms of targeted biopower. This is additionally compounded by influences such as ethnicity, class and for Sue, her learning disability. Therefore, returning to study for these women created an open door through which, as Hancock (2007) states, it is possible to see newly created intersecting and relational categories producing inequality, leading to new and complex configurations. Therefore, studying for women who occupy additional roles at specific life points (motherhood, caring for aging parents) may lead to a potential escalation of powerful forces acting on their study.

One strong manifestation of repressive power was in battles and conflicts with *time*. In all of the narratives except Kate's, time appears as a self-governing mechanism in which women had to negotiate with their *time*. That there is conflict in what constitutes a *right* choice within *time* is evident in Ayesha's account as a choice made between her family and studying, illustrating the narrative of the selfish, self-interested women who, in placing study over family,

reflects asymmetric power relations (Skelton, 2005). This asymmetry is seen when these women study whilst occupying a range of roles and responsibilities. This competition for time places a restraint on the women's engagement, as their narratives tell of trying to meet all possible demands (Colley, 2007; Foster, 2009; Yorke and Longden, 2010). The 'beset by trials' narrative offered by Penketh and Goddard (2008: 322) indicates this negotiation with *time* as an omnipresent feature of women's participation, something echoed by Skeggs (1997), Reay (2003) and Wright (2013).

When the four women with children chose study over their families, they indicated the presence of *guilt*. This *guilt* was experienced when they transgressed what they and their families considered as the dominant discourse of care (Skeggs, 1997). This means they stepped over the normalising boundaries of motherhood (McCune et al., 2010; Tett, 2000; Robinson, 2012) as they entered the Foundation degree trying to aspire to a new self. Therefore, within a Foucauldian account, *guilt* is a battle between transgression and deeply ingrained discourses of socially constructed behaviour. Resisting feelings of *guilt* within study needs a powerful rationale and an end goal that is worthy of the sacrifices the women make. This is where the women with children enter into what Skeggs (1997) defines as a trading mechanism, as they try to trade or barter motives for study against the *guilt* they experience. Motives based on being a good mother, employee and to earn more, became a process of exchange that rationalised a continuation of study (Bowl, 2003; Brooks, 2013; Vaccaro and Lovell, 2010; Wainwright and Marandet, 2010). This discursive exchange is an attempt to legitimate resistance to *guilt* and can be seen in

Parveen's motive to be a good role model for her children, Sue wanting to study so she can help her son at school, or Shabana saying 'it's just one more year'. What these women offer are reasons to study and in so doing try to ameliorate the strong and omnipresent sense of guilt (Walkerdine, 2003; Wright, 2013). Walkerdine (2003) encapsulates this within concepts of 'survival guilt' where motivational structures justify participation. It may be that the women who have children are trying to do what Reay et al. (2002), Reay (2003) and specifically Colley (2006: 18) describe as offering 'notions of altruism, and selflessness' in order to ward off unwarranted criticism.

It is important to acknowledge the individualised and relative nature of power to challenge generalised accounts of women's participation. Kate's account and image is different. Defining herself as white, middle class and as a young adult, Kate shows the benefit of participating on a part-time Foundation degree whilst inhabiting reduced structural and social subjectivities. Enhancing her participation is her middle class awareness of *choice* as this emerges with some clarity from her narrative. Kate has always known she has choices, whereas an understanding of *choice* is less clear within the narratives given by the other women. It is possible to consider that power works very differently for Kate, as seen in her image there is an individualised linearity, which shows elements of ease not available to those subjectified within a range of discursive regimes (Reay et al., 2001a, 2002b). Her narrative does not allude to herself as feeling *resilient*, but she chose it for one of her self-descriptor words. However, this word changed to *determined* as she entered onto Bachelor level study indicating a

shift in her self-belief. Kate has *time* and this means she can make her study '*all about her*' in a way the other women cannot.

Although class was important in the horizons of choice identified, it remained a muted discourse in the narratives in Chapter 6. This certainly reflects what Skeggs (1997) states is the invisible discourse of class within her research and it may hint at Giddens' (1991) concern that modernity has removed signposts of social class and gender, leaving the individual to construct their own meaning. However, class in this study was an implied structural force that lay behind the choices the women made and the availability of these choices to them. These choices were made visible in the narratives, reflecting delayed study and within the images of linear learning.

There is an allusion to a recognition of class as a belonging mechanism, as the women indicate they belong within their social groups and in this institution. Although not confirmed within the narratives, this sense of belonging may reside in a recognition discourse in which the women in the study see themselves reflected within the wider student cohort as low paid workers within the childcare sector (Edmond et al., 2007).

In terms of students' perceptions of their academic identity and self-confidence, the five women interviewed offered a relatively stable sense of positive and enabled identity as they moved from Foundation degree to Bachelor level study. However, the questionnaire findings in Chapter 5 revealed that this was not a universal finding. There was a minority counter discourse offering self-

descriptors like *worried* and *scared*, revealing concerns as to the enormity of the decision made to progress. That *worry* is associated with forms of risk and is not a new finding as Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) consider it an outcome of a highly individualised life in which the cost of increased choice is an increase of risk. The choice to progress or the choice to leave at the end of the Foundation degree is an example of individualised choice and its associated risk. For Beck (1992), risk exists as visible and invisible forces which, for Giddens (1991), becomes a state of determinism in that known external forces (class, gender, race) increase the potential for failure. However, whilst risk was present in all they did, the individual narratives showed what Cornwall et al. (2008) articulate as the intertwining of empowerment and resistance.

8.3.2 Counter-Productive Institutional Discourse

The institution occupied a dual role in the women's experiences of being on the Foundation degree and transitioning on to Bachelor level study. The collective accounts offered within the focus groups indicated the productive aspect in which funding structures were forms of financial and personal liberation. They also exposed issues that challenged the women's post-Foundation degree identity construction.

The first of these was discussed in the first focus group that occurred just after progression to Honours level, when the group declared a need for early feedback on the first assignments they had written. As seen clearly in Chapter 7, whilst students know the institutional assessment turnaround of 25 working days, the

process of transition created within them unease which led them to doubt their ability. Whilst none of the women felt the work had been an academic 'step-up', like the academic difference identified by Penketh and Goddard (2008), confirmation that they were working at the right level would have allayed their fears.

Assessment and feedback as forms of discourse are, in Foucauldian terms, a discursive loop, having one without the other offers an imbalance of power creating feelings of ambiguous ability (Foucault, 1978). For these women, transition to higher-level study created instability in the confident identities that they disclosed in their narratives and in the self-descriptors selected in Chapter 6. Feedback would have offered academic and emotional reassurance as a conformational process, which is important at any time within learning, but it is more so when there has been a substantial shift within the site and practice of learning leading to a renegotiation of learning identities (Crozier et al., 2008; Moore et al., 2013). Similar concerns can be found in findings from Morgan (2013) and Bingham and O'Hara (2007) as *time* appears as an important part of this adjustment and acclimatisation process, as the women in this study were able to resist this short-lived instability and continue to feel confident.

There was another aspect of the group discussions that did not feel resolved in time and appeared as a deep-rooted concern. This was in the amalgamation of groups, which increased the group size to over 30, and in the changes of learning spaces, which shifted from flat to tiered formal lecture rooms. This created a difference in learning *affordances*, which, as a concept, describes the

relationship between the learner and the learning environment; what one can offer the other (Billett, 2001). What the students suggest is that the Foundation degree offered a social pedagogy within a communicative learning environment, which they did not consider was replicated once they entered Bachelor level learning. For the women in the study, this was the most noticeable change within the transitional process, as it created a discontinuity in their learning experience. It is worth reflecting on Crozier and Reay's (2011) point here that institutional expectations influence the creation and recreation of learner identities. It is evident that the learning expectations for these women, as students, were those created on the Foundation degree they studied in this institution. Thus, this transitional re-creation of their group learning identity was not one they were prepared for or had expected.

This alteration within perceptions of learning affordances may be an institutional attempt to create a learning environment on the final year of a Bachelor study degree conforming to notions of independent learning styles and increased learner autonomy. Whilst this reflects notions of independent and dependent student learning identities (Leathwood, 2006), these women indicate a preference for a pedagogy based on interdependent learning which appears as a collaborative and collectivist approach to learning, based on socially constructed principles of knowledge generation and sharing (Bruner, 1996). Merriam (2001) reiterates that such approaches are foundational in transformational learning.

Research on Foundation degree to Bachelor level transition sees learning discontinuity as an inevitable part of a geographic and dual sector influenced

change (Bingham and O'Hara, 2007; Morgan, 2013; Winter and Dismore, 2010). Findings from this research reveal that even within the perceived stability of internal progression students experienced a reduced form of discontinuity that altered the rhythm of their learning. However, made very clear in Chapter 7 was that this transitional change was resisted and, as students, they were able to negotiate a way of existing within this change. This may be due to the women's belief that they are authentic learners with their narratives disclosing that whilst on the Foundation degree they were able to transform into critically reflexive learners, engaging in meaning-making processes. What emerges from the collective narratives is the women's understanding of the dynamics of learning, developed whilst they participated on the Foundation degree. They find time to support their theoretical and conceptual understanding, and find ways of being social, gaining the collective emotional resilience they use as a support mechanism. In so doing, there is an acknowledgement of what Hodkinson et al. (2007: 419) state is that 'a learning culture is not the same as a learning site'.

8.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter reveals that experiences gained on Foundation degree study provided the students in this study with a range of skills and competences, enabling them to transition onto the part-time Bachelor degree. Some of these skills are academic and knowledge based that provide the cognitive foundation for their belief in the ability for transition. However, a variety of dispositional and affective responses such as resilience and resistance were exposed as coping

mechanisms, used to defend against external and internal discursive power that encroached upon their participation.

Within the framing of Foucauldian *governmentality*, it appeared that experiences gained could lead to transformational accounts of academic and personal development. This transformation reflected an individual holding of power within participation and thus, could be perceived as affording a technology of self.

There were also experiences that, as technologies of power, were less productive of new identities and these restrained or hindered the women's participation.

The following and concluding Chapter 9 draws the study together, focusing on the research questions set and a consideration of the implications of this small-scale narrative study.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Implications

9.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes this exploration into women's participation on a part-time Foundation degree and their transition onto part-time Bachelor level study and the construction of identities in this process. What emerges from the findings and further considered in the sections below is the potential the Foundation degree has to provide the women within this study with the beginnings of personal empowerment and academic transformation that facilitates transition onto Bachelor level study. However, as this research has suggested, forms and functions of power influence the potential for empowerment and transformation and for these women the development of meaningful motives for study, coping mechanisms and a set of academic skills enabled them to transition onto Bachelor level study feeling that they belonged and could claim to be 'authentic' learners. This section begins with a consideration of the research findings under the research questions asked and continues with an exploration of the implications of this research study and the contributions it has made to knowledge. Completing this chapter is a reflection of the limitations of the study, which is followed by a final concluding statement.

9.2 Foundation Degrees as a Means of Empowerment and Emancipation Facilitating Transition onto Bachelor Level Study

The heading for this section indicates the role the Foundation degree occupied for the women in this research as the Foundation degree provided a location in

which the academic and personal identity of women emerged as stronger and making them, as students feel capable of transitioning onto Bachelor level study. This finding is explored in more detail below using the research questions that acted as the framework for the inquiry.

What factors contribute to successful transition between Foundation degree and Bachelor level study?

A variety of factors contributed to the women feeling able to transition successfully from Foundation to Bachelor degree. These emerge from the women's narratives as increased levels of confidence, feeling able to resist externally generated difficulties and the development of a range of academic skills. The amalgam of these factors created a strong sense of personal and academic achievement that led to these women feeling they could transition on to Bachelor level study.

The development of academic competencies in critical reading, writing and referencing was an important part of the creation of an academic identity as it made them feel authentic in their participation. It is also fair to say that the development of these skills reduced the women's sense of vulnerability to failure by providing them with codes for successful participation. Learning these academic codes was an investment for them as the internal transition they experienced meant these codes could be transferred onto Bachelor level study, which created experiences of transition more like an academic step *across* than a step *up*. A strong sense of personal identity evolution was tightly bound with

the development of this newly enhanced academic identity. This was evident in accounts of academic development allowing these women as students to 'shine'. It is clear that all of the women perceived themselves as academically and personally transformed at the end of their Foundation degree.

This academic transformation was evident in claims of success when assignments were completed and achieved but the personal transformation appears within narratives in which for some women, success was also measured by their resistance to diverse and individual ranges of non-student issues that, as external forces of power, encroached upon their time and the women's confidence. For some of the women, being able to study against a background of challenging domestic and personal issues gave them a sense of empowerment and personally owned power. The resistance the women claimed in the continuation of their study enabled them to show facets of academic and personal buoyancy when exposed to the risk of external forces on the women's study.

Survival therefore became a strong part of their success narrative and as indicated above, surviving was based on the development of a set of coping structures that functioned as defence mechanisms from external and internal discourses that threatened their study. The word internal is used here as many of the women had to defend themselves against personal narratives of self-doubt and low self-esteem. Therefore, being able to develop and deploy coping dispositions was a significant factor in feeling able to complete the Foundation degree and enter onto Bachelor level study. One such coping mechanism

appeared in the form of collegiate working and friendship groups that functioned as support networks offering motivational encouragement and acting as an external chorus reinforcing resilience and resistance. It is suggested that being able to cope with higher-level study and the complexities within this was predicated on recognising a shared identity within such support networks and such an affiliation manifested itself, as Parveen indicates, as feeling they are 'in the same boat'. Feelings of *sameness* aided the women's assimilation into their experience of HE thus enabling them to feel they were the 'types' of students who could complete a Foundation degree and achieve Bachelor level success.

Gaining the Foundation degree as a qualification confirmed the women's belief in the possibility of transition. Therefore, gaining this sub-degree motivated them to see themselves as *real* Bachelor level learners. Additionally, as the process of transition was internal, moving from Foundation degree to Bachelor level study encouraged a continuity of student hood. This continuity saw capability and confidence span the transition divide with reduced levels of academic or emotional dislocation. What is significant is that this continuity was an important part of the women's success as they expressed a strong sense of group identity and collegiality that reflected close learning and personal bonds.

This leaves one of the most important factors to emerge within this process, which was the development of resilience that appears as an internal motivational dialogue. This resilience appears as defiance, tenacity and stubbornness as some of the women would not concede to external forces that impinged upon their ability to study. Motives become crucial, as it is possible to see the women

in the narratives balancing the desire to study against the difficulties they experienced. Study for all of the women was a negation of worth and cost and being resilient meant seeing their academic study as *worth* the difficulties experienced, which enabled a resistance of self-doubt and to encroaching external concerns. This negation as a personal and internalised dialogue, needed to be flexible in order to navigate potential difficulties. Therefore, within definitions of successful learning and transition for some of the women, resistance to difficulty became an internally produced defence mechanism.

Feeling resilient, developing academic language, knowing the codes of academic working and possessing strong motives for study can be perceived as strong technologies *of self* as women were able to use these technologies to alter their internal self-narrative and see themselves as empowered and transformed. One of the strongest technologies was that of intrinsic motivation and *wanting* this learning opportunity for themselves was one of the strongest factors in their ability to resist difficulty.

How do institutional structures function in the participation of women as part-time students who study on a Foundation degree and transition onto Bachelor level study?

Institutional structures were mainly productive in the women's participation. These structures are identified as the pedagogy they received whilst on the Foundation degree, gaining entrance onto the Foundation degree, the internal progression process and the funding they received. Institutional structures as

discursive regimes shaped and created the women's learning, enabling them to experience higher-level learning and providing a location in which there was the potential to build self-confidence and belief.

The pedagogic approach the women as students experienced whilst on the Foundation degree is credited as creating collaborative communicative learning spaces. From the accounts offered, it is possible to see this form of pedagogy providing the women as students with a strong collegiality that underpinned both academic and personal adaption to higher-level learning. The pedagogic approach they identify whilst studying on the Foundation degree seemingly created an understanding of the affordances within learning situations that reflected an interdependent learning culture not one based on contrasting conceptualisations of independent and dependent.

The influence of pedagogy as an institutional regulating discourse is one that moulds and shapes students' expectations of learning. In this way, pedagogy is a normalising discourse and a form of enculturation. Therefore, changes to the learning environment as the women transition to Bachelor level study are significant because they alter their relationship with pedagogy, which had functioned as a normalising student discourse. Whilst, the women's focus group narratives reflect such claims of enculturated learning, it also shows that when students have a strong and secure sense of academic identity, change can be accommodated.

Whilst there was a change in the learning environment that created a renegotiation with learning, the focus on *academicness* within their Foundation degree study emerged as an important part of their ability to transition successfully onto Bachelor level study. The women's reception of academic codes as forms of institutional discourse early in their study illustrates the way the Foundation degree can be approached as a vocational and academic programme and how, when the balance is appropriate to the students' needs this facilitates transition to higher-level study and creates academic belonging and authenticity.

The ultimate manifestation of productive institutional structures as forms of discourse was the beneficial funding that liberated these women from debt and gave them the opportunity to study on both the Foundation degree and Bachelor degree. This funding when linked to detraditionalised access becomes a seductive amalgam of institutional structures and as such, the funding mechanism acted as a transformational structure as it provided the means for these women to claim the possibility of self-determined change. The funding mechanism was pivotal for the women at the heart of the case who declared that without it they could not have participated within higher education at any level.

What are the micro influences of discursive power on the identity construction of women as part-time students who study on a Foundation degree and transition onto Bachelor level study?

These micro-influences act as *biopower* that as the power that directly influences the women as individuals means that some women had difficult and complex negotiations with time, *guilt* and feeling of transgression. These micro-formations of power emerge as the most individualised and individualising part of the women's experience of higher-level study, which is apparent in the subjective positions some of the women inhabit as they study. The images created and the accompanying narratives illustrate this individualising of power clearly and the image Kate created, exemplifies the relational nature of power as her narratives reflect a less complex relationship to study. Her subjective intersections are different and as such, Kate's narrative indicates the caution necessary in generalising the lives of women of part-time students.

What did emerge within a consideration of *biopower* was the epochal influence, as certain points in the women's lives seem to intensify the power experienced. Shabana's narrative explains this clearly as childbirth, house renovations and an extended family situation that escalated the intensity of the power on her study. Therefore, returning to learn on the Foundation degree means this pathway to learning has the potential to offer empowerment but in so doing, it can also function as a conduit of emotional conflict. Suggested here is that wanting to study created a dual internal dialogue of resistance and *guilt*. *Guilt* as a powerful internal discursive force has the potential to be *technology of power* because it tries to suppress some of the women's learning.

There is evidence of the influence of personal internal discourse acting by suppressing the participation and the identity construction of some of the women

before they began the Foundation degree and evidenced in their narratives as they entered study. This negative and repressive discourse is seemingly created by experiences of delayed participation that for some bought with it high levels of anxiety. This delayed participation for others was exacerbated by a legacy of past educational difficulty and failure, which when intersected by class, gender and ethnicity meant study could only occur at specific points in a women's life.

What are macro influences on the participation of women as part-time students who study on a Foundation degree and transition onto Bachelor level study?

For the women in this study, the macro influences are those that work outside of their study and over which they have little control or influence yet, have a direct influence on their lives as forms of *biopower*. This is the 'political as personal' and considered relevant since the women in this study participate on Foundation degrees because of a wider policy discourse. This means a policy discourse in which Foundation degrees were created to meet employment shortfalls in associate levels positions, to be part of the widening of participation in HE and contribute to lifelong learning. This policy discourse, places the individual as being responsible for their own employability and reflects the prevalence of some of the motives expressed in which women identified enhanced employability by engaging in study for professional development as a reason to return to study.

What it also creates is a discourse based on *worth* and *value*, which has the potential to undermine the investment the women have made. This discourse as

explored in Chapter 3 is one in which Foundation degrees are still considered *not quite HE* and 'worth' is enmeshed within notions of classed, ethnic, gendered and stratified attendance. This deficit discourse seemingly dismisses the contribution the Foundation degree makes as a learning opportunity that offers a 'second chance' at learning and as Chapter 5 indicates, for some of the women in this study, the second chance offered provided the possibility of liberation from a past and a move towards a new and imagined future.

How do women as part-time students studying on a Foundation degree and transitioning onto Bachelor-level study experience power?

The responses to the questions above indicate this clearly as a duality of power in the women's creation of academic and personal identities but it is not experienced as binary. The fluctuating nature of power shows that it affords positive and empowering experiences gained but also threatened the success of the women's study. As it was individually felt and experienced, what was positive for one was not necessarily the same for others. In a Foucauldian account, this is the individual and relational nature of power that is formed from within and between the social and structural categories of existence. These intersecting categories of existence affected the levels and influence of power on women's participation but the narratives also indicate the possibility of a personally held power that was experienced as *resistance*. What emerges from this consideration is that the ability to deploy resistance seemingly determined the women's success and determined whether experiences were positive or negative as they studied.

The images the women created showed this relationship to power within the symbols, colours and words they used which seemingly increased the visibility of the individualised accounts of power that appeared. Therefore, the symbolic language used in the images signposted the intensity of the women's experiences reflecting highly personalised accounts that gave a human face to the narratives offered. Power appears in the images as external in the form of family pressures and work issues but these images also displayed some of the power they claimed for themselves. This personally claimed and individual relationship with power was manifested in the diversity of symbols used that represented peer support (helping hands) and the role of academic support (books and post-it notes). Therefore, it is possible to consider images as tools that can explore the relational nature of power and as providing a lens through which to explore the complexity and individuality of women's experience of power within their HE participation.

Images have the potential to illuminate the complexity of power but in addition, this research hopes to have demonstrated the efficacy of *governmentality* as a construct that can explore how power through discourse shapes and creates identity. This thesis presents this Foucauldian approach as a critical and analytical lens through which to provide a new perspective on the 'beset by trials' narrative. Through this lens, it is possible to view power as fluid in the way it influences women illustrating how it moves differently for different women and the images the women created showed this difference.

9.3. Research Implications

Although this is a small-scale piece of research, it is possible to see strong implications emerge. The first implication is related to policy and the need for Foundation degrees to be considered as locations for personal and academic empowerment for women as part-time learners and seen as a vehicle for social justice. Following this are two specific implications for practice that as the role of interdependent learning and internal progression see students as able to develop and maintain academic and personal identities that create a personal concept of student hood. When this student hood is established, it leads to the creation of stable academic identities. The final implication focuses specifically on research on women to consider the role and function of personally held power within the creation of a possibility discourse.

9.3.1 Implications for Policy: Foundation degrees and Social Justice

At a wider policy level, one implication arising from this study is not to lose sight of Foundation degrees as a means for social justice and fair access that can provide a space for empowerment and transformation for women as part-time students. As qualifications, the inherent strength of Foundation degrees resides in the vocational diversity and acceptance of students from wider social classifications with lower or no formal qualifications. This thesis has attempted to present entrance onto Foundation degrees as enabling the women in this research to benefit from university education but this is against a background in which Foundation degrees are often considered as low worth, of limited value

and seemingly possessing a general lack of academic esteem (Gibbs, 2002; Dunne et al., 2008).

Concern regarding students' academic capabilities to study at higher-levels has turned arguments about 'widened' access into institutionally focused arguments about readiness for academic learning and the site for the delivery of these qualifications (Robinson, 2012). Whilst sector diversity may have increased access, it has not necessarily raised the profile of Foundation degrees as qualifications of substance. Doyle argued in 2003, that the then UK government in the creation of Foundation degrees had attempted to open up new opportunities for student and sector diversity through the delivery of Foundation degrees within both higher and further education institutions. However, Fenge (2011: 380) argues eleven years after the introduction of Foundation degrees that they are still 'not quite HE'. Within this timeframe, Foundation degrees became the default higher education qualification for 'different' types of learners maintaining educational hierarchies of difference. Therefore, it is possible to see that a prevalent discourse still exists in which a different and 'new' kind of student is often seen as a problem needing Foundation degrees as a solution. Like Harvey (2009), I was sceptical of regarding Foundation degrees as a solution to increased access and social justice and I began this research with some hesitancy over the capability of Foundation degrees to provide a meaningful space for academic and personal growth. This initial concern was based on literature that presented Foundation degrees as a problematic solution to promises of mass higher education (Fenge, 2013; Penketh and Goddard, 2008).

What this thesis has indicated is that the women who studied in this study institution were able to experience Foundation degrees as a form of social justice not just by their participation on a Foundation degree but also by the funding provided by the institution. Foundation degree completion and progression onto Bachelor level study were supported by an institutional funding structure that removed the fear of debt. As Chapter 1 sets out, such a mechanism was offered by an institution with a strong vocational identity that claimed a commitment to widening access and this funding process seems to reflect this claim. It is possible to see how fortunate the part-time students who attended this institution were to receive this type and level of financial support as the host institution ceased its full financial support of part-time Foundation degree students in 2012.

Financial concerns may be a pivotal reason for the reduction of part-time applications as increases in tuition fees and the influence of austerity measures on public sector workers may deter lower paid students who form the main constituency of part-time Foundation degree students. However, this reduction in part-time applications has wider policy implications as it may threaten the provision of courses that offer flexible learning opportunities and undermine access to HE as a means of gaining increased social and human capital (Reay, 2003; Stevenson and Clegg, 2011). Part-time higher education is known to contribute to social mobility (Callender, 2011, Clegg, 2011) and whilst there has been a continuous and overt focus on the needs of widening opportunities and raising aspirations for younger students, the crisis of reduced part-time applications seems to be less prominent.

The relationship between applications and the provision of courses is part of a precarious balance of supply and demand and as evident from figures provided by HESA (2015) there has been a year on year drop from 2010 until 2013/14 for all forms of part-time study showing this as a critical 40% drop since 2010 (HEFCE, 2014). This drop is evident in the numbers of women applying for Foundation degrees. Figures (for UK domiciled students only) show women's part-time Foundation degree participation as standing at 26,105 in 2009/10 and at 14,300 in 2013/14 (HESA, 2015).

The reduction of applications for part-time courses and particularly for Foundation degree study is problematic as one significant implication of this research is that studying on a Foundation degree as a part-time student potentially offered empowerment through the development of increased confidence, skills and knowledge and proving an opportunity to gain altered life outcomes. That Foundation degree participation for the women in this study provided a source of emancipation emerged in the pathway the Foundation degree created on to higher-level learning. As the narratives the women in this study offered, accessing the Foundation degree and transitioning on to Bachelor level study was a catalyst for life change. Therefore, it is possible to conceive of Foundation degrees in this context as part of what Biesta and Tedder (2006) describe as a strong tradition that sees adult education as a lever for empowerment and increased choice and opportunity. Therefore, reducing pathways in HE that afford opportunities for such empowerment creates concerns about reduced life choices and chances especially for women who

need the sort of flexible pathway through learning offered by the Foundation degree, and the opportunity to complete it part-time.

9.3.2 Implications for Practice: Interdependent Learning and Internal Progression

For students who have been absent from formal education, a process of re-acquaintance with learning cultures and rhythms may be needed. Re-entering education and higher education can be a challenging experience for all learners and for those with gaps in their study, this can be more so; however, returning to study can be additionally complex for women who occupy additional roles and exist within a range of gendered subjectivities. This is why research such as this is important as it considers approaches to learning and the creation of learning identities. One specific implication emerging is the way in which this research explored the re-entry into study and how this entry is managed by the women as learners and by the institution as a place of learning.

Interdependent learning

The women in the study indicated that this reintroduction to study was less problematic when it was undertaken collaboratively and within a regime that embraced social approaches to learning. This social interaction was an important factor in the way the women as individual students made sense of their learning experiences. What this implies is that interdependent learning and peer support encouraged the creation of strong and enduring academic and personal identities within study. That positive attitudes to learning were maintained across

the progression from Foundation degree to Bachelor level in this study highlights the significance of internal progression as a means of providing consistency of learning identity within the progression experience.

This research debates the legitimacy of claims for polarised accounts that embrace HE learning within constructs of *dependent (non-traditional)* and *independent (traditional)* students (Crozier and Reay, 2011; Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003). Such a polarised view of learning categorises students into those who *can* and *cannot* and the findings arising from this research suggests that this polarity of discourse serves to create artificial categories of student engagement. Whilst not conclusive, this research presents the merits of interdependent learning as something that exists within these two extremes. Interdependent learning accepts that social interaction and support structures are natural features of human learning and that such social and shared relationships within learning are essential components within transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997). This collectivist approach to learning embraces the relevance of shared learning spaces and experiences in the creation of enduring learning identities.

This tentative implication in the acknowledgement of the role of interdependent learning as something that can lead to effective learning is significant because it requires institutional reflection on what learning looks like and feels like for students in HE. As Deakin-Crick and Yu (2008) state, this institutional reflection needs to consider learning as an effective balance of social and academic aspects within the development of shared learning. This thesis has drawn on

Tinto's (2005) work on student engagement and retention and although he explores the experiences of younger direct entry students, his focus on the benefits of collaborative approaches to learning is important to note. As shown in this study, students who learn together, feel they belong together and through this experience of increased academic and social engagement they show increasing levels of resilience and persistence.

The Benefits of Internal Progression

One of the important aspects of this research is the implication for identity construction within progression, specifically within a HE to HE context. This potentially signposts the relevance of this 'seamless' approach to learning transition as it encourages the construction and continuation of learning identity as students study in Foundation degrees without the crossing of sector boundaries and changes in institutional culture and ethos to gain access to Bachelor level study. The internal progression available to these women enabled the maintenance of stable academic identities creating a continuous sense of student hood across the Foundation and Bachelor degree transitional process. However, although there was a significant amount of stability within this progression process, it is acknowledged that the transition experienced was not completely without concerns or differences. The potential implication of this is that even within the internal HE to HE context explored the coherent and smooth progression requirement as set out in the Foundation degree Benchmark (QAA, 2010) seems elusive perhaps until there is a wider consideration of the role of collectivist learning principles in which learning affordances are considered as

central to student successful transition. Therefore, the implication of this on HE policy resides in understanding and acknowledging the relevance of internal progression for students engaging in Foundation degree study. In 2008, Penketh and Goddard identified the paucity of research on the potential benefits to Foundation degree students when progressing within the same HEI and whilst this research has added to this, there is room for more studies to consider this transitional process.

9.3.3 Implications for Research on Women

Framed by the discourse of lifelong learning and policies of widening participation, as figures identified in Chapter 3 indicate, higher education has continued to recruit women as part-time learners from a range of backgrounds. This research has attempted to demonstrate how women as part-time learners within HE experience the intersection of different subjective positions and the intensity of the overlap of these within HE study. For some, the overlap was more intense and this intensity emerged within the images created and by the use of the analytical tools of *technology of self* and *power* that exposed individual responses to power through discourse. For this reason, one significant implication from this research is the efficacy of *governmentality* as a critical and analytical tool that enables the possibility to perceive the way in which women can resist the biopower created by their subjective positioning and how it is possible for them to be self-determined because of the relationship *they* hold with power. This heightened visibility of personally held power demonstrates why Foucault's construct of *governmentality* was essential in highlighting the role of

forms of resistance to power that when linked to motives to study, reinforced the women's capability to survive and achieve.

One clear implication is the use of identity talk as explored in Chapter 6 to understand women's learning identities. This identity talk is created by the selection of words that were used by the women in this research to describe themselves as learners. That so many of the women selected positive words as descriptors of their learning identity was surprising and more so when there was a relative stability of these words across the transitional divide. This surprise existed because when I was searching for words to use for this identity talk, a wealth of negative terms was found in which women's learning could be defined as difficult and problematic. Positive words indicating success and achievement, although available somewhere within the field of study (Fuller, 2001; Crozier and Reay, 2011; Dunne et al., 2008) were much harder to find; in other words, I had to *want* to find them. What this tentatively implies is the role of such a process of discourse generation in creating increased insight into the way women use words to describe themselves at different parts of a learning process. This may help to elucidate the relational and contextual nature of power in which to explore as Rose (1999) states women's capitalisation of self. Such a process may show as Walkerdine (2003) states, that women are capable of constant self-invention within a negotiation of power.

9.3.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This section signposts specific contributions to knowledge that draw on the implication of the research and these contributions are presented as *methodological, theoretical and educational*.

Methodological Contribution

The feminist approach taken to the research within the positionality identified makes a strong methodological contribution. This contribution exists in the methods used to mediate and negotiate the power within my privileged position. Image-based methods used as graphic elicitation functioned to challenge my professional and researcher identity. In addition to combat my perceived holding of power, I provided transparency in the analytical process presented in Chapter 6 and the mediation process that functioned as a 'participant-check' was created to ensure that students could challenge my understanding of *their* experiences. The approaches used in this research provide a reflexive tool set, which would be useful for any researcher using image-based research and holding insider power and privilege.

Theoretical Contribution

Foucault's construct of *governmentality* as a lens through which to explore women's relationships to power enhances the range of critical and analytical tools that can be used to explore the micro and macro formations of power on women's lives. When used as presented in Chapter 2, these tools offer the potential of exploring variable and fluid formations of power in significant depth

and detail. The Foucauldian construct of *biopower* that exposes the micro-influences of power offers the possibility of imagining a personally held resistance to power. In this imagining of a resistant self, there is the possibility of emancipation and empowerment.

Educational Contribution

The final contribution is divided into two to embrace a wider pedagogical debate concerning *types* of student and *types* of learning. This research offers a tentative challenge to polarised accounts of learning and exposes the role of interdependent learning as a collectivist approach to learning that offers a blend of learning that does not create hierarchies in which independent learning is necessarily 'better'. Interdependent or collectivist learning accepts that shared learning situations and collegiality can strengthen learning outcomes and thus, present 'better' learning opportunities.

The second part of this contribution resides in exposing the significance of internal progression on the creation of stable learning identities. The exploration of internal progression within this research has highlighted the benefit received by students when progressing from Foundation degree to Bachelor level study within the same institution exposing the role of institutional discourses and the continuity of these. As a piece of research that explores the benefit of internal progression, it joins a small field of research such as that exemplified by Penketh and Goddard (2008), that investigates Foundation degree to Bachelor level study transition from an internal progression perspective.

9.4 Limitations of the Research

The section above indicates the implications of the research and the contributions it makes to knowledge but any claims need to be considered alongside any perceived limitations of the research. Concerns regarding sample size and selection, the positionality of the researcher and the design of the questionnaire are identified below as specific limitations.

9.4.1 Sample Size and Selection

Research on educational practice often contains concerns for sample size and breadth of generalisable data (Flyberg, 2006; Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2001). Yet small-scale research has a significant part to play in understanding the complexities and inter-relationships within human relationships. Even though this is a small-scale study it can tease out some complexities potentially overlooked in larger sample sizes, whilst I can argue that what was sacrificed in breadth I gained in depth, I need to acknowledge that the size and specificity of the sample reduce significant claims in terms of the findings. In addition, I cannot claim that the sample for the case interviews was fully representative of the full cohort experiencing the phenomena explored within the case. As an ethical researcher, I adhered to a process of self-nomination and with this comes the possibility of a skewed sample arising as I cannot coerce all participants to engage in the research. I therefore acknowledge that the women selected as the 'heart of the case' are *broadly* but not fully representative and as such all claims made need considering with this acknowledgement in mind.

9.4.2 Researcher Positionality

Additionally, my role as an insider researcher and as a person with some authority could be perceived as creating a power-informed bias and assumed knowledge. Either of these issues could effectively blind a critical gaze (Watts, 2006) and to respond to this perceived limitation, I applied a self-bracketing process where possible and I declared my role and my identity within the research. Chapters 1 and 4 explore the relationship between power, positionality and reflexivity and the visibility of this focus on positionality indicates how I have embraced this as a potential limitation. In defence, I offer that the strong reflexivity adopted in this study within the management and the methods selected are means to reduce my influence in the research and the data so as not to obscure my feminist claim for the transformative and emancipatory quest of this research.

9.4.3 Questionnaire Design

When the analysis of the questionnaire was completed, it was obvious that there were concerns with its design. The most significant concern was over the domestic identifiers offered as descriptive labels of existence. This method was the first tool designed and created and as such, it stands as a record of my researcher development. This is not an excuse but a reflexive consideration that research knowledge and skills increase over time. However, even though there are limitations, I argue that the data collected function as they were designed to,

which was to understand motives for participation on Foundation degrees and for progression onto Bachelor level study.

9.5 Final Comments

At the beginning of Chapter 1, I explained my interest in this study as wanting to know about the experiences of women as part-time students who studied on a Foundation degree and transitioned onto Bachelor level study. Part of my inquiry was to know what this process looked like and felt like for them, as I wanted to know how and if success was possible. In Chapter 1, I referred to Diane Reay's work on women who study. She states:

We catch glimmers of painful past experiences as well as exciting possibilities, struggles to survive alongside successes. (2003: 302)

At the end of this study, I feel I saw more than glimmers of *exciting possibilities* in this research, I saw women alter their futures and feel transformed by their participation and mostly in difficult and challenging circumstances. Six months after the completion of the fieldwork, it was my privilege to be at the women's graduation ceremony and to see them walk across the stage as Bachelor degree graduates. I had seen them *being* Foundation degree students and then transition into *becoming* Bachelor degree graduates, now I saw them as graduates. Although the narratives they gave exposed the journey from Foundation degree to Bachelor degree as difficult and more so for some than others, when they walked across the stage they claimed the success they had aspired to four and a half years previously, when they entered the Foundation degree.

Appendix 1: Programme Overview

Course Design

Foundation Degree

The following is an overview of the course design for both the Foundation degrees and the Bachelor degree the students attend. The participants in this study participated on two separate but very similar Foundation degree pathways and both are shown below. The Foundation degree Professional Studies in Early Years (Fd PSEY) and the Foundation degree Professional Studies in Learning (Fd PSL) have significant similarities, not just in the modules studied but also in their delivery, assessment mechanisms, and the environments in which they are taught. The main difference influencing the choice of pathway is the age range of the children the students support. To clarify, the Fd PSL focuses on Key Stage 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum (children aged 5 to 11) whereas the Fd PSEY is designed for those working in the early years (0 to 5). Both Foundation degree pathways reflect a blend of theory and practice and this is seen in the design of the assignments, which are tailored to meet vocational and theoretical aspects of working with children.

Table 16: Foundation degree Professional Studies in the Early Years (Fd PSEY) Overview

Semester 1 Level 4 Sep – Jan	Semester 2 Level 4 Feb – June	Semester 3 Level 4/5 Sep – Jan	Semester 4 Level 5 Feb – June	Semester 5 Level 5 Sep – Jan
<i>Young Children's</i>	<i>Creative and Critical Approaches to</i>	<i>Child Health* Behaviour and</i>	<i>Professional Practice 2</i>	<i>Research for Enquiry</i>

Semester 1 Level 4 Sep – Jan	Semester 2 Level 4 Feb – June	Semester 3 Level 4/5 Sep – Jan	Semester 4 Level 5 Feb – June	Semester 5 Level 5 Sep – Jan
<i>Professional Management Practice 1</i>	<i>Study Development</i> <i>Multi-Agency and Safeguarding</i>	<i>individual Differences</i>	<i>Role of ICT</i> <i>Communication, Language and Literacy</i>	<i>Interpersonal and Communication Skills</i>

* denotes the final Level 4 (first year of the Foundation degree study) module

Table 17: Foundation Degree Professional Studies in Learning (Fd PSL) Overview

Semester 1 Level 4 Sep – Jan	Semester 2 Level 4 Feb – June	Semester 3 Level 4/5 Sep – Jan	Semester 4 Level 5 Feb – June	Semester 5 Level 5 Sep – Jan
<i>Professional Management Practice 1</i>	<i>Creative and Critical Approaches to Study</i>	<i>Sociology of Childhood*</i>	<i>Professional Practice 2</i>	<i>Research for Enquiry</i>
<i>Principles of Learning</i>	<i>Development</i> <i>Curriculum Studies</i>	<i>Behaviour and individual Differences</i>	<i>Role of ICT</i> <i>Communication, Language and Literacy</i>	<i>Interpersonal and Communication Skills</i>

* denotes the final Level 4 (first year of the Foundation degree study) module

Bachelor Level Study

‘Bridging’ Programme

Although not compulsory, all students are recommended to attend an academic ‘Bridging’ programme, which as a set of support sessions, is a formal requirement of Foundation degree programme design to support students’ transition between levels of study (QAA, 2010). As a response to student needs,

this institutional process tries to ensure that students progressing onto the next level of study are academically aware of what lies ahead. In this way, *Bridging* is designed to act as a form of induction or orientation programme. The claimed aim of these *Bridging* sessions is to explain the differences in assessments, the dissertation process, modules offered for study and the increase in the level of critical thinking skills needed to be successful at Bachelor level study.

Students are given advance notice of this *Bridging* event and the sessions it offers and attendance at these sessions is voluntary. It is held within the institution and lasts for one afternoon of 5 hours duration. There are three sessions:

- Academic writing
- Individual Tutorial
- Dissertation Process

Bachelor Degree (Honours) Early Childhood Studies

This is not a purpose designed 'top up degree' written specifically for part-time students to progress onto but rather it exists as the institution's final year of a three year Bachelor degree (Hons) Early Childhood Studies offered as a stand-alone 'top-up degree' as a two-year part-time degree for students who progress. This is why it is called a 'top-up degree' as it allows students to transfer the Foundation degree credits gained (240) into a full Bachelor level degree (360). As a progression route, all the Foundation degree students who want to work with children are funnelled onto this one 'top-up degree', which increases the

group size from around 20 to about 60. This 'top-up degree has two entry points; September and February and the students in this study began the Bachelor degree in February 2012.

Table 18: BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies Programme Design

BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies PART-TIME			
Semester 1 February to June	Semester 2 September – January	Semester 3 February - June	Semester 4 September - January
<i>Contemporary Issues</i> Level 6 module (20 credits)	<i>Teaching and Education</i> Level 6 module (20 credits)	<i>Inclusive Practice</i> Level 6 module (20 credits)	<i>Health Matters</i> Level 6 module (20 credits)
<i>Dissertation – April – November (40 credits)</i>			

Taking the details from this degree website, this 'top-up' degree 'provides students with a high level of academic knowledge and enhanced practical skills in the development and education of young children'

There is an acknowledgment of the part-time nature of the group as it states that the timetable is created to be 'sympathetic to the working patterns of the sector'.

The 'top-up' Bachelor degree is based on the knowledge gained in the Foundation degree as there is a strong focus on vocational knowledge but as it is an honours level degree there is an expectation of a higher level of academic performance. The reduced number of modules and an emphasis on theoretical approaches to childhood indicates this degree follows a 'traditional' academic model that has an increased focus on critical thinking and deeper theoretical and

conceptual understanding. The word limits in the assignments increase to allow students to demonstrate their increased academic thinking and students' performance is assessed in essays, reports, verbal presentations and a final extended and individually focused research project (dissertation).

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

The following is a copy of the questionnaire as used in the research. It was presented as a booklet to participants. For confidentiality, my contact details have been removed as it would disclose the name of the institution that hosted this study.

About Me

I am an Ed.D researcher from the University of Birmingham exploring progression and transition . Your participation is very valuable to my research.

Thank you very much,

Claire Lorgan.

Please see the accompanying sheet for my supervisor's contact details should you wish to contact him.

An exploration into Foundation degree experiences and transition onto Bachelor degree study

Claire Lorgan

My Research Information

My research is an exploration of your experiences of being on the Foundation degree and your transition onto the 'top-up' degree, BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (BA ECS).

Question Menu

Please answer all the questions in any order and add your comments where requested. Although this takes time, your written comments really help by adding depth to my research and allow you to have your say.

There are 3 sections to complete and should not take you more than 15 minutes.

THANK YOU
for your time and support

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Section 1 : These questions provide me with background information.

1. Please circle the age you were when you began your Foundation degree.

18 - 20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+

2. Pick underline the category that best describes your ethnicity.

White
White British; White Irish; Other White Background
Black
Black British Caribbean; Black or Black British African; Other Black Background
Asian
Asian or Asian British Indian; Asian or Asian British Pakistani; Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi; Chinese; Other Asian Background
Dual Heritage
Dual White and Black Caribbean; Dual White and Black African; Dual White and Asian; Other Dual Heritage Background.
Other Ethnic Background: Please indicate
Undersified Includes: Not known; information Refused

3. What qualifications did you have on entry onto your Foundation degree?
Please state your level/3 qualifications in the box below (A levels, NVQ, BTEC etc)

4. Please circle the category that best describes your current employment/role?

Teaching Assistant	Nursery Worker/Assistant
Learning Support Assistant	Cover Supervisor
Nursery Manager	
Other (please state)	
Is this:	Paid/salaried Unpaid/voluntary

13. Please circle 3 words that accurately describe you at this point in your study.

knowledgeable	successful	strong
focused	confident	worried
confused	happy	resilient
able	empowered	failure
weak	learner	student
fragile	scared	secure

The list above may not contain all the words you need. Please add your own word/s here if you need to.

Thank you very much for your time and help.

HELP

I need your help to continue my research and ask you to write your name below if you would be prepared to help me further. This may be useful to you as you will experience the research process first hand and witness the use of different methods used.

To help you make your decision, please see the accompanying information sheet, which describes the research project in full, the level of commitment necessary and my responsibility to you as a participant in my research.

11. Did you attend any progression or 'bridging' sessions? (Please circle)

yes unsure no

If yes, Please indicate how useful the following sessions were in supporting your understanding of working on the BA ECS (Hons).

1= very useful—5 = not very useful

	1	2	3	4	5
Academic writing					
Dissertation Support					
Individual Tutorials					

12. How do you feel about your ability to achieve now that you have completed your Foundation degree and are starting your 'top up' BA (Hons)?

Place X on the number scale provided.

	1	2	3	4	5
Unsure of your ability to achieve					
Very confident in your ability to achieve.					

5. Please circle one word that best describes your home role/responsibilities.

mother wife carer partner

Other (please state) _____

6. Please circle if you achieved a Foundation Degree? YES NO

Was this achieved at this institution? Please circle YES NO

Section 2: These questions allow me to explore your reasons for enrolling onto the BA (Hons) ECS 'top up' degree.

7. Firstly, I need to know why you began your Foundation degree. Please tick the statement/s that best describe your reason/s for beginning your Foundation degree?

- In terms of work, it was to comply with current government policy
- To gain advancement or promotion in my current job
- To gain higher paid employment
- To develop myself as a professional
- To achieve it for my family/children
- To help me change my job or career
- It was a 'second chance' opportunity to continue my education
- To prove I could achieve a higher -level qualification
- To achieve it just for me

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

If you wish, please add a comment in the box below to further explain your choices above

8. Please rate the possible endings to these statements which could explain your reasons to progress; I am progressing onto the BA (Hons) ECS

1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neutral, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree

..... so I can achieve my dreams of gaining a degree	number
..... because I want to continue to study	
..... because I do not feel my Foundation degree is adequately recognised as a qualification	
..... to prove to myself I can achieve a degree	
..... to prove to others I can achieve a degree	
..... because I feel I have to	
..... to achieve a degree to change my current employment/profession	
..... because I like studying at this institution	
..... because I want to achieve a higher qualification after this	
..... because I trust my lecturers	
..... because if I don't, I will feel a failure	
..... because I want to change my life	
..... because my employer expects me to	
..... because I want to develop myself as a professional	

Please add your own reason or expand on any of the above.

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Section 3: This section is all about your perceptions of transition

In this research, *progression* is defined as a movement that occurs when you have achieved one qualification and, as a result of this, have the opportunity to enrol on to a higher-level qualification. *Transition* is an individual and personal process experienced as you adapt to your new level of study.

9. In terms of your ability to achieve, how did you feel when you started your Foundation degree? Place X on the number scale provided.

1	2	3	4	5
Unsure of your ability to achieve				Very confident in your ability to achieve

10. Please rate the following statements.

1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neutral, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree

I feel my Foundation degree provided me with the knowledge, skills and understanding I need to enter onto the BA (Hons) 'top-up' degree	
I feel empowered to progress because I have achieved my Foundation degree	
My Foundation degree has given me confidence in my ability to study on the BA (Hons) 'top-up' degree	
I do not feel I will be successful due to my Foundation degree	
I need more support after completing my Foundation degree	
I know how to study effectively as a result of completing my Foundation degree	
My Foundation degree has made me feel that I need additional study skills to be successful	
My Foundation degree has made me feel that I am not prepared for this level of study	

5



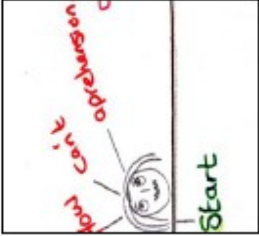

Appendix 3: Self-Descriptors - Words and Sources*

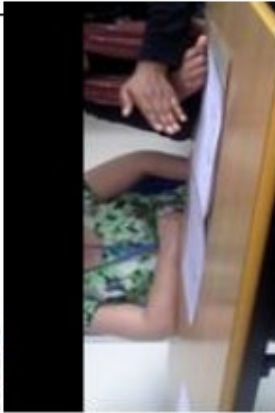

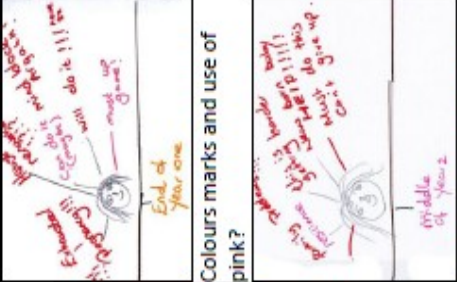
knowledgeable	successful	strong
Callender et al. (2011) Greenwood et al. (2008) Mason (2010)	Crozier et al. (2008) Crozier and Reay (2011) Reay et al. (2009)	Christie et al. (2008) Sheard (2009)
focused	confident	worried
Cree et al. (2009) Glogowska et al. (2007) Merriam (2004)	Dunne et al. (2008) Greenwood et al. (2008) O'Donnell and Tobell (2007)	Brine and Waller (2004) Crozier and Reay (2011) Reay et al. (2002) Reay (2003)
confused	happy	resilient
Bowl (2001) Glogowska et al. (2007) O'Donnell and Tobell (2007)	Ecclestone (2004) O'Donnell and Tobell (2007) Pollard et al. (2008)	Crozier and Reay (2011) Maddi et al. (2002) Penketh and Goddard (2008)
able	empowered	failure
Christie et al. (2008) Leese (2010) Reay et al. (2009)	Fuller (2001) Leese (2010) Penketh and Goddard (2008) Yorke and Longden (2010)	Reay (2002, 2003) Fenge (2011) Foster (2009) O'Donnell and Tobell (2007)
weak	learner	student
Chipperfield (2012) Brine and Waller (2004)	Archer (2007) Crozier and Reay (2011) Leathwood (2006) Leathwood and O'Connell (2003)	Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) Reay (2003) Thomas (2011)
fragile	scared	secure
McCune et al. (2010) Reay et al. (2010) Leathwood and O'Connell (2003)	Brine and Waller (2004) Christie et al. (2008) Reay (2003)	Christie et al. (2008) Fuller (2001) Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) Mercer (2007)


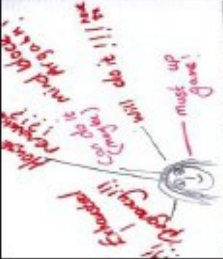

* All sources can be found on the reference list

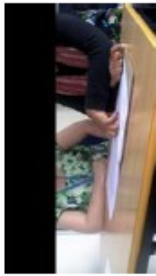
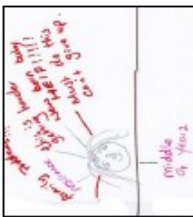

Appendix 4a: Case Interview Analysis Table

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Transcript: (red – interviewer)	Video –Audio Analysis	Image analysis	Emerging Themes
<p>Thank you very much for helping me today if you'd like to talk me through what you have created today</p> <p>Well I thought I wanted to kind of like talk about the whole journey rather than little bits of it ...but I've pinpointed (inaudible word) to start off with when I started the course</p> <p>I was like how am I going to do it I probably can't do it I was a bit apprehensive about the fact that you know meeting new people meeting challenges and then maybe failing them cos that's what I thought I thought I'm no good I won't be able to do it and I don't know what I have let myself in for at the end of the first two modules cos the first semester we did 2 modules I was like maybe I can do it but at that time I was juggling work family uni work there was a bit of.... You know....</p> <p>I had house renovations they'd just started but I was relieved that I'd done it and thought needed more support at home and who I could turn to there were not many people and then towards the end of the year I got pregnant and I was exhausted and I was finding it hard to kind of like settle down and so some work cos I had morning</p>	<p>Notes made for next interview – What needs clarification or discussion?</p>  <p>00:00:14 Uses hand gesture to reinforce point made.</p> 	  <p>Exclamation marks, overt use of red?</p>	<p>Fda is source of apprehension</p> <p>Fd began to instil self-belief</p> <p>Gendered subjectivities – home life difficulties</p> <p>Intersectional forces impacting on work.</p> <p>Identity as student or wife, mother daughter?</p> <p>Extended family?</p>

	sickness and everything like that and children as well as house renovations really it was like full blast I had to go on live with my parents and it was hard because I got other brother and sisters living there as well ..erm..	00:01:40 		FdA increased sense of achievement – feeling of being able to do it but it is hard work. Intersecting issues and competing demands affecting study Want to develop study skills need High achievement
	and all that time though even though I had completed 2 modules erm erm and I had come to the end of year 1 I was still thinking you know I am really going to do it and at every stage I must admit this was always there I always had a mind block in the middle to start off with I can do this I know what I'm doing ill get a mind block in between and then it's just coaxing myself getting away from the house to work and everything like that and work and try to do it but [3:87] I was towards the end of the year right I'm going to determine im determined I will do it erm.. I have to do it but at the end of year 1 I thought I need to improve my work ..	00:02:43 Hands hover over the image – two key points – end of year 1 and middle of year 2. 	 <p>Colours marks and use of pink?</p> <p>Break in the line – use of red text. Is this important</p>	<p>Intersections – impact on learning</p> <p>Drive to succeed</p> <p>Shows resistance</p>



	<p>I was getting good grades anyway and I wanted to do better to see if I can do it for myself more than anyone else just to see if I can improve on everything that I was doing what I found hard erm quite often just kind of making my work flow erm I'd take about 5 attempts before I actually came to the final one I thought that's ok erm I feel I feel able to do it erm and also again... my husband said he would support me but when it came to the middle of year 2 (tut)</p>	<p>00:03:29</p>  <p>Turns to seek approval for this consideration. Eye contact.</p>	 <p>What is a 'mind block' ?</p>	
	<p>When I was pregnant I had finished the 2 modules in year 2 I had a new born baby I was like (aghh) what am I going to do I will have to give up erm and I had to... when I first had to ask for extensions at this point and that point at the beginning of year 2 just everything I just thought it took its toll I think I had a little bit of post-natal depression for a bit... not long and.. and that's why I put my family problems .. and at that point my husband did not understand what I was going through obviously the kids did not understand that much either I thought you know what I will carry on and I became resilient I just though bring it on erm I can face it if I can go through the whole of pregnancy and though house renovations living in an extended family situation ..</p>	<p>00:04:15</p>  <p>Lack of support – isolation as student within family identity?</p>	<p>Increased use of red to indicate these issues – Increased detail on face of image produced. Why is this done?</p>	


all of that ...at one point it got me down but I was ready to think about just take a year out erm and I came like I'm... I was about to walk out one day and say I can't do it I have to come back maybe when the baby's slightly older and when I have gotten through some of my depression and problems and ...I thought... it's	00:06:19 	More focus on self here – hence details? 	Study as a motivator against life difficulties
one more year out of my life it just became like that erm and I just plodded on and carried on erm and again I [2:65] mind you all that time even though I had a lot of things going on the assignments was did I didn't have a mind block because when I think back work kept me going kept me motivated to work a bit harder to get over the problems to get over them because I had this to do so it gave me a bit of a purpose if you know what I mean erm yeah erm	00:07:09 	Why is this purple? Image shows happy person – strong positive words to indicate success. Exclamation marks for emphasis.	Fda has Increased confidence
I came to the end of the Fda and I was like ...it was a struggle getting there but at the end of it I thought wow yeah I've done it now I've got a certificate to say that I have completed my foundation degree I was like ecstatic that I'd done it erm ... and I thought again well I can do this now so more than anybody I think I proved myself that I can do it because before I used to feel with anything that I wasn't very confident as a person I'm probably still am not and I hid it a lot and I know I hide it but before you know I wasn't I just felt that at every stage of my life I had to prove something to other people	Fda was hard work Fda is a sense of Sense of achievement Fda has Increased confidence Fda made her feel she		

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				had something to offer
but now this is me proving to myself that I can do something I'm not sure erm so yeah..	 00:07:56 Hand gesture reinforces notion of this being for her. Claiming her sense of personal intrinsic motivation.			FdA as something to prove – symbol of achievement
Now tell me about these heads? Ok it started off cos I started out a bit like not sure maybe I can do it maybe I can't do it I think it was just as I was doing it that's how it's come about as I thought about the start .. I thought I went in .. oh my god and then when I saw all the work like that and I was like ok but I felt smaller then ..	 00:08:16 Hands scrunch up to indicate initial frustration.	 First head is very small - why?		FdA was overwhelming at first battles has increased resilience does not want to give up

FdA 1 - Shabana
April 2012
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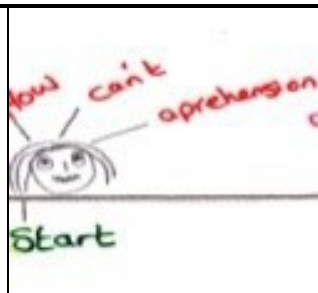
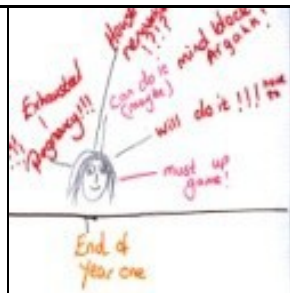
	<p>lot more work involved there's a lot more expectations academically from the BA but yeah I think I'd start off here so the line would continue and then maybe hopefully at the end of the BA my head would be that big</p>	 <p>00:9:37 Sense of satisfaction is evident – there is little doubt that this student will achieve – FdA increased her self belief?</p>	<p>Is there a feeling of apprehension due to the colour chosen for final marker? (see above)</p>	<p>FdA prepared for progression</p>
	<p>The heads will get progressively bigger? Bigger yeah as I progress as I obviously..you know.. it's me proving I've done it and erm yeah I've kind of reached a final.. you know a final destination I can say I have got a degree at the end of it the</p> <p>FD was not easy to get there the BA won't be easier but maybe I'll enjoy it more as I've been through the process and I'll enjoy it a bit more because at the moment I have that again [3:78] I have a mind block</p>	 <p>00:10:11 In first weeks of transition the mind block is there – she feels challenged by the experience.</p>	<p>See the image above and use of red</p>	<p>FdA is preparation for BA</p> <p>FdA as stepping stone for BA</p> <p>FdA is preparation for level 6 study</p> <p>FdA supports skills for BA level study but it is hard</p>

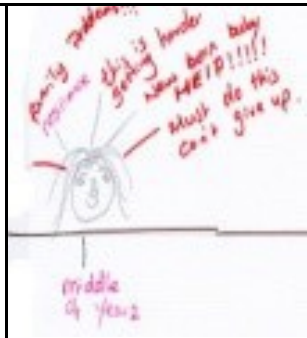
	So will you work through the same process again				
	Yep I'm trying at every.. I'm trying at this moment and although I sit there scribbling.. that's my way of plodding through it writing something that relates to it and somethings that don't and hopefully .. touch wood my mind block will be unblocked maybe 7 days before hand in				
	Anything else you want to say?				
	Erm ..No just that you know .. I suppose although, I kind of helped myself through this I have had tutors who have understood me and maybe they've been through the same process and so far erm I haven't had any tutors who didn't understand .. maybe .. you know why I have a mind block.. so yeah that's it		00:11:41 Hands folded to indicate completion of points made and perhaps satisfaction at the support offered?		Role of tutors – institution when fronted by lecturers
	Just going back to your questionnaire that you did for me and I just want to ask you about the 3 words you picked at the end knowledgeable, empowered, and resilient. So how do these 3 words reflect on the journey you have created now?				
	Obviously knowledgeable because although I knew some of the theories and practice you need to know why things are carried out in the job that I do and why A has to be done and B has to be done Empowered in the sense that I'm going to do it			Is the uses of hands important?	FdA has increased knowledge for profession and self

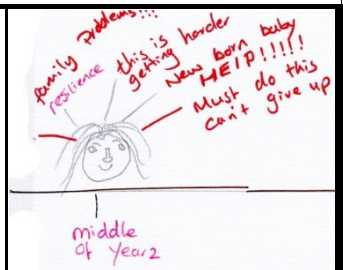


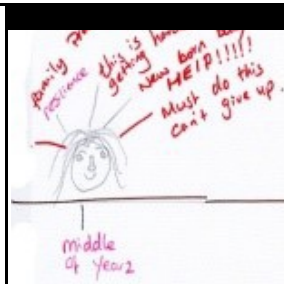
FdA 1 - Shabana
 April 2012
 13: 52

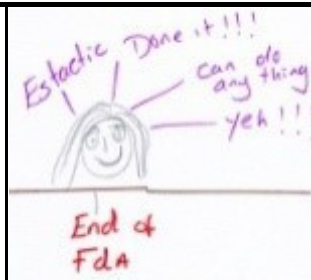

	<p>[3.09] bring it on whatever and it doesn't matter whatever</p> <p>Resilient because over my journey I've been.. I'm not saying it's been... I know there's people going through harder situations but for me it was a lot to cope but at this stage especially ... I came to a point [2.01] the more problems I have the more I seem to be able to concentrate on my work and escape also it's something I enjoy that I want to do. I will do it no matter what comes my way.</p>	 <p>00:13:42 Uses expansive hand gesture to indicate the journey again. This is a key feature of her interview – she sweeps her hands over the journey taken. Resilience has been a key part of her journey – she calls it determination of defiance – not being beaten by issues.</p>	<p>FdA had led to Empowerment and sense of personal achievement</p> <p>FdA has increased notions of resilience</p> <p>FdA has increased understanding of self-reliance and determination</p>
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Appendix 4b: Case Interview Mediation Table

	Narrative	Image	Code and themes
	Thank you for doing this we are going to go through the image you created please add comments are you comfortable with this would you change it		
S	I'm comfortable with it I just want to add more		
	More worries more things to do		
S	More worries it doesn't get any easier it just gets harder not the work I actually enjoy the work it's just the time finding the time and when you do have the time actually getting your mind to it		BA transition as problematic due to intersecting issues
	Yes I agree with that now one of the things I was interested in was the timeline you did the colours you used and the words that you chose as well so one of the things I noticed was that you started off with green was there any particular reason (points to image 1)		
		Image 1	
S	Because it was fresh		FdA as a new start in study journey Resistance
	It's a good point		
S	Obviously I had all of the apprehensions and all that but I was still kind of like excited it was new and I was thinking it's a ...challenge ... I started a challenge off really so I felt fresh and I had all the energy		FdA as a new and fresh start - resistance to past
	It was all new		
S	All new and exciting		
	Here you move into orange for the next two sections I wasn't quite sure if you'd knew if you'd gone orange and you go to pink and then to red		
		Image 2	

S	I .. there's two things in my mind I think I had two things I had all of the erm my knowledge growing . . it's becoming a lot more harder to erm . . .be more academic because although the knowledge is growing it always seems finding time to make sure the work is more academic a bit more challenging from what I've being doing before to make it you know . . to progress that little bit more so its progression as well as you know kinda like a bit of I need a little bit more . . . just pointing in the direction of mainly academic writing that's my biggest hitch		BA as problematic – awareness of academic limitations
	So then green orange pink and red . . did the pink have any particular significance there (points to image 4)		
	Image 4		
S	Erm maybe there a lot more going on in my head there's the baby being born and she's a girl so there's pink		Intersectionality and competing demands – a new baby
	And then obviously red at the end of the FdA		
S	It's like at least one part of it is over		
	So it wasn't a warning or a worry or anything		
S	No . . I think it's like wow its over		
	Good So one of the things I noticed as I was going through your picture I've done the narrative as we recorded plus the images from the video and the images from your picture and where ever you have pointed to something I've linked it to that and tried to interpret that on the image you have created one of the things that you did quite a lot all through the video was to move your hands to one side and I wondered why		
S	Yeah it was like to say I've done it		
	To dismiss the concerns I've moved along is this something that you felt quite physically that you were doing it was a physical thing		
S	Yes cos each part is done then		
	And that is how you actually managed to		

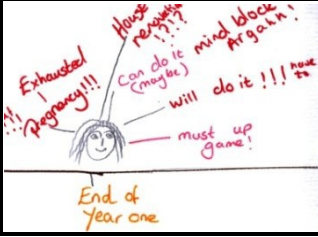
	deal with this process		
S	I think it's in my head like that I .. my ... I do a lot of actions and I think I associate a lot with my words and things like that with actions		
	It was an actual physical thing to see because you've got your hands placed over here and you've had a lot of issues competing with you study. Are all the red negatives things?		
		Image4	
S	Yes all the obstacles that come when you study		
	Was that a conscious thing when you did it did you decide to do it that way		
S	I think with me even when I do an essay like I'm doing at the moment I just do it and then I'll go and analyse it I think this comes as a natural response to . . you know . . how I felt as the years go by and the course went on		FdA has encouraged study skills and reflection
	Because it's just and also the heads grew and obviously as the heads grew the faces got happier (points to images 1 and 9)	 Image 1  Image 9	
S	Yeah because it's like each stage had been completed and I feel a little bit more . . dunno . . empowered . .		FdA as transformational and empowering
	One of the things I was interested in is here was that all of the faces do not have a huge amount of facial features but his one does its actually got a drawn in nose which is different to the others was that just a fluke or was that something you deliberately did (points to image 4)		
		Image 4	

S	I don't know it was actually		
	Was that a significant time for you		
S	Yes it was cos at that time although I was at home there was more things going on . . and more erm things to juggle although I had the time to do it . . erm I'm not saying I didn't enjoy it I did er I did enjoy it because I was a home although I had all these other things I was at home and I was able to take a little bit of time out maybe that's what it was		Intersectionality and competing demands
	So you had a bit more time to think about yourself as a person		
S	Yeah and also I know the baby was hard work like looking after the baby like at that time actually she as quite easy to look after (laughs) It gets harder each year		Intersectionality and competing demands
	Obviously you ended up with the purple and was there anything specific about this using purple (points to image 7)		
		Image 7	
S	I like the colour purple and I thought I'd achieved it and I thought I'd wait for that unconsciously like the green with the fresh start and the purple patting yourself on the back		FdA as something to celebrate and be proud of an achievement
	Well done . . the heads get bigger and we've discussed the erm . . features her the face becomes interesting because its overdrawn several times and the eyes are wild		
S	I think it the emphasis on the fact that wow its finished (laughs) it's done and what an achievement (points to image 9)		FdA as success and achievement
		Image 9	
	And the heads . . as the heads get bigger at the time you said the head was small and if you started again you wouldn't start right at the beginning you would start right about here would that still be		

	the case would the heads still be the same size or would they be even bigger		
S	Erm . . at the moment they probably be the same size as that one (image 8) or that one ...but	 <p>Image 8</p>	BA as difficult restarting the journey
	Why do you think it is		
S	Because it's just a bit more challenging challenging more obstacles more things to worry about and obviously you know . . . something else has happened in the family . . in my life and the people in my . . what do you call it . . . support network so that's kind of flattened a bit here		BA as difficult restarting the journey Intersecting issues
	Right so has this undermined you a bit		
S	Yeah undermined me a bit yeah		
	Ok because you did say you were hoping with the BA that there were a lot more expectations academically erm . . but you hoped that at the end of the BA that your head would be that big.. are you still aiming for that prediction		
S	It's very erm . . . I'm trying to be optimistic but erm .. I'm kinda clutching at straws at the moment		BA transition has been affected by outside and intersecting forces
	Cos you did say you enjoyed it		
S	I do I do enjoy it when I come into college and I enjoy all the . . knowledge I get from there and the you know interaction I get with the people but then it's going back and not being able to start . . having the time to reflect and put it down on paper		Intersecting and competing demands problematises study Non-traditional student issues
	Do you think if you had done the full-time route you would have enjoyed it more if you could do this all the time		
S	. . I don't know about that because . . . if I'm I wasn't working yes but I think with the working if I was working part-time whilst doing the BA full-time I don't think it would work give me more and more challenges		Non-traditional student issues
	Are you stuck at the moment in the competition between the study that you do and the work and home so is it like competing		

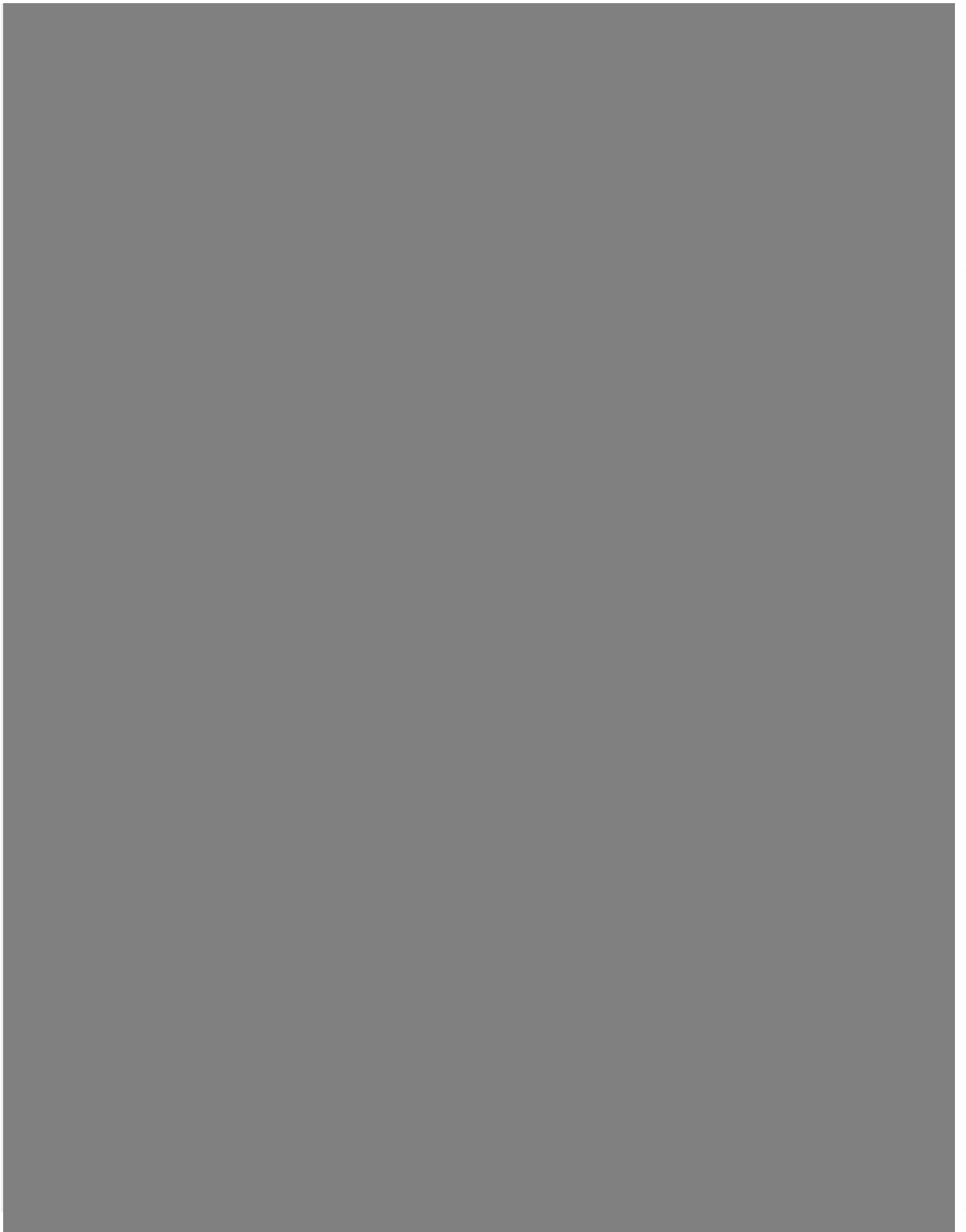
S	Yeah its competing not having the time finding . . the energy that erm . . the thing is what I find is academically I'm also I think is also the way the college does essays if I'm going to do an essay I'll do an essay if I'm going to do a presentation I'll do a presentation finding cos its new learning isn't it and sometimes I can't see the purpose of what they've done what they've done		Intersecting and competing demands problematises study Non-traditional student issues
	Doing the presentation as an essay		
S	And not doing the presentation I prefer to do it like that and is especially the last essay that I did erm . . . although I did get like a I think it was like a B+ or something for it I still thought that I could have done better if I hadn't had the other but to do cos I think that took away from me being critical being that analytical person trying to be a little bit creative and I don't think my brain has that capacity		Changes in assessment type creating tensions
	So when you did the foundation degree there were sort of traditional assignments based on you work essays presentations reports case studies and now you've gone onto the BA are you finding that there is a slight difference that's not tied to your work		
S	I don't mind that even though even when I hope I did this and I hope I that my tutor so though that when I did my final degree I didn't just stick to what my tutor was talking about and I tried to look outside of the box as little bit erm. I've tried to do that because erm how do I put it . . the focus now is on 2 or 3 different things doing the essay being critical and analytical you know and things like that I'm having to do that extra creative		Changes in assessment focus from FdA to BA
	We've tried to be more creative in our assignments but you're not finding this helpful at all		
S	No I think quite a few people . . especially I find it an obstacle rather than being . . I don't think it does anything for me I don't think it allows me to be critical analytical erm I think it determines me and taking me away some of my energy away from that		Changes in assessment focus affecting attainment
	Interesting when I asked you last time to pick 3 words you picked knowledgeable, empowered and resilient now you've already mentioned the work empowered		

	would you change any of these words		
S	Erm in terms of the work no I might just add another add frustrated		BA as problematic
	You do feel frustrated		
S	yes		
	Is this because of your home life		
S	Yes home life but also the academic		BA as problematic in terms of academic expectations
	You've used colours and I did wonder if you were worried about progression onto the BAif it signified another step another part of the journey		
S	Obviously yes it would be a sign of trepidation of you know like slowly stepping into it you know you know with the level of work it gets higher and you think can I produce that . . can I go a little bit higher is this my line where I kinda stay		BA transition as difficult BA creating self-doubt
	So it does stand out purple can be a celebration colour but the use of red and one of the things about colour you have 13 words highlighted in red above the line and of these they are all negative words or negative phrases associated with difficulties and hardship and experiences in many ways the difficult journey you have had Erm the orange words up here are uni work and family are bullet pointed the pink then emerges for the motivational words that emerges through and I wondered how aware were you that you were using this coding system		
S	I was aware of it as it was a different colour and like I have had more negatives than positives counteracting in my life as I suppose it still is I suppose they're more reds now than there is orange and pinks erm pink erm cos . . I dunno		BA transition as difficult
	I'm just going to ask you a few questions here do you think you were ready to start the foundation degree		
S	I think I was I think I was		
	Did you do an access course		

	I did an access course and I did a good job and that and I kinda just got stuck there . . . there . . . I just needed to move forward with the work that I did I just wanted to progress further		Past experiences as a motivator to progress to level 4 (non-traditional route)
	Obviously you are well and truly on the BA now erm do you feel the foundation degree supported your progression		
S	Oh god yes it . it like although kinda like although I'm saying about the work and that the content I'm saying about the work is just erm having to do the extra bits it's just more time		FdA as a support for BA transition but there are differences in assessment
	Is it the changing structure of the assignment and the level of the work		
S	The harder level		BA is step up in academic expectations
	The skills that you've learnt on the foundation degree can you see the relevance of these		
S	Oh god yes		FdA as a strong foundation for higher level study
	Now when I asked about bridging did you attend bridging		
S	yes		
	Was it useful any particular aspects that you felt were useful		
S	Yes it was the academic writing that was the most and the talk about the dissertation that's a new thing to talk about		Institutional support as positive and responsive
	Thinking about how you got on with the BA you've got your dissertation coming up and other hurdles for you to complete how are you feeling about it now academically emotionally or even personally		
S	Obviously with the situation with my family I'm thinking gosh I don't think I can do it because it is hard for me finding the time and the thing is with me I have to doodle and doodle and I haven't had the time to do that recently		Intersection and competing demands affecting study
	You described it as a mind block when you have these moments when these things get so much		
S	Like yesterday I sat for 3 hours and I did a bit of research and I thought that I'd get through the assignment started and nothing came out		

	Again did you have any doubts we've spoken about the issues here did you ever doubt you'd complete your BA		
S	Oh at the start here I did but obviously when I got there I didn't doubt it I just . . . like wanted to make sure that at least all this hard work I don't get a 3 rd class or something like that I just want to make sure I can use my degree rather than it . you know . . I don't want to end up with a classification you know I can't do anything with		Motivated by fear of failure – low classification (credentialism and entry into teaching)
	So you feel there is an awful lot of pressure on you to do as well as you can again we discussed the words and we've added another one frustrated if I can ask 1 bizarre question here what have you become through this journey if I said who are you what would you say		
S	Erm I say I was a more confident facilitator its had a huge impact on my work cos I'm able to argue my points and I do quite a lot of that at the moment and through that some lessons have been changed some things have been added on and I've become a bit more professional I'm like work is work . . . and . . . and I'd say more confident as I know what I'm talking about academically . . . stronger		FdA as transformational on professional role BA as transformational on professional role
	Do you think you belong on the foundation degree		
S	Oh yes		Belong on FdA now it is achieved
	Do you feel you belong on the BA		
S	I do when I can in here when I go home I can't think of it's not that I can't think it's like you've tidied up you've done everything and you sit you have a cup of tea as youre so exhausted through the day and your mind is blocked it doesn't come out erm I doubt it		Feeling of belonging but heavily influenced by intersecting and competing demands
	Thank you very much for you time and support today is there anything else you'd like to say about your image		
S	No you've covered it		

Appendix 5: Ethical Approval



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